the weekly
Standard

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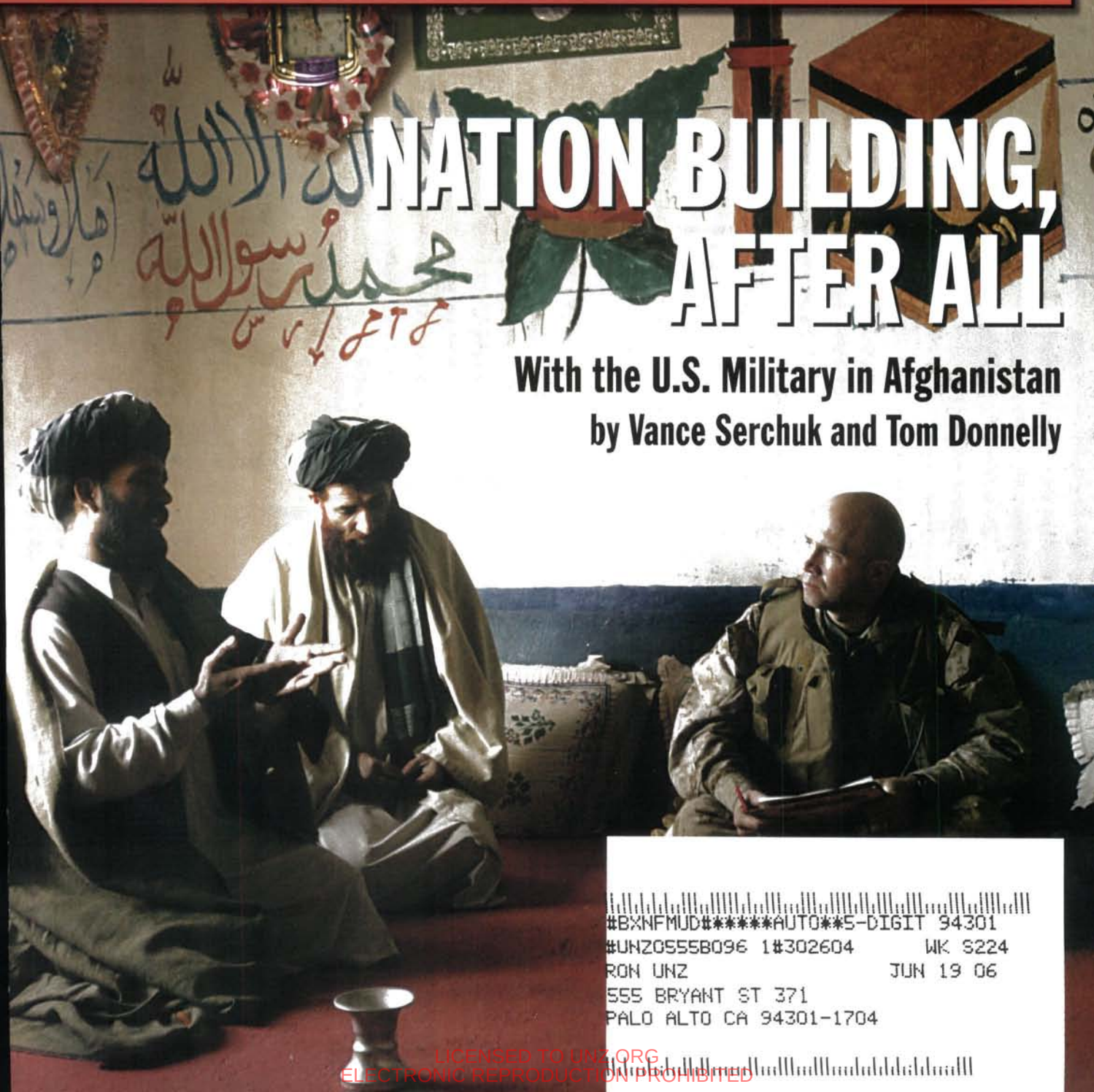
"HELL, NO"—KOFI'S NOT EXONERATED
CLAUDIA ROSETT

NATION BUILDING, AFTER ALL

With the U.S. Military in Afghanistan

by Vance Serchuk and Tom Donnelly



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Sandy Berger: Guilty as Charged

Last Friday, in U.S. District Court in Washington, former Clinton National Security Adviser Samuel L. "Sandy" Berger pled guilty to charges that he removed and destroyed classified materials from the National Archives on two occasions in 2003—presumably to keep out of the hands of the 9/11 Commission embarrassing marginalia that he or some other official had scribbled on a 2000 memo critical of the Clinton administration's inattentiveness to terrorism threats.

The *New York Times*—which often disapproves of lawbreaking, document destruction, and cover-ups by high government officials—went notably easy on Berger. "Ex-Clinton Adviser to Admit Taking Classified Papers," read their headline. (The *Washington Post* headline made the more obvious point: "Berger Will Plead Guilty.") According to *Times* reporter Eric Lichtblau, Berger had "agreed" to plead guilty, had "agreed" to "give up his security clearance for three years," and would pay a $10,000 fine. Lichtblau's walk-up piece bent over backward to minimize Berger's criminal activities, while stressing his reputation as "a respected figure in foreign policy circles for years."

THE SCRAPBOOK suspects Berger had a lot less discretion in the matter than the *Times*'s careful choice of verbs suggests, but then we don't have its sources: Berger's lawyer Lanny Breuer, who said Sandy "regrets the mistakes he made during his review of documents at the National Archives," and "associates of Mr. Berger," who said Berger stole the documents because he "was just too tired and wasn't able to focus enough, and he felt like he needed to look at the documents in his home or his office to line them up. He now admits that was a real mistake."

It was. It was a mistake when, on September 2, 2003, Berger took from the archives a long, detailed "after-action" report written by counterterrorism guru Richard Clarke that criticized the Clinton administration's response to the (thwarted) terrorist plot on Los Angeles International Airport in 1999. And it was undoubtedly a mistake when, a month later, Berger removed four additional drafts of the document, stuffed them into his coat and pants pockets, and, once he "realized" that the documents were "essentially the same" as the one he had already stolen, cut three of them into teeny, tiny pieces, which he then destroyed. We've all made that kind of mistake.

It was also a real mistake when he improperly removed his handwritten notes from the archive and lied about it to Archives personnel, the Justice Department, and the media. (Those lies were even told to Lichtblau's colleagues at the *Times*, something he is too much of a gentleman to bring up. "Mr. Berger returned all of the documents and notes to the archives in October, within a week of his learning they were missing, his lawyers said"—*New York Times*, July 20, 2004.)

Berger is not alone in having a sketchy memory. Lichtblau reports that "Republican leaders seized on" the Berger story last year—Berger at the time was the top foreign policy adviser to John Kerry, and likely to become secretary of state in a Kerry administration—but the reporter forgets to mention any of the sundry fulminations that emanated from prominent Democrats at the time. The omission prompted us to go back to the original reporting on the Berger investigation, and we found the Democrats were outraged that Republicans thought Berger guilty of wrongdoing.

Some dismissed the story outright. "This is much ado about nothing," said Dee Dee Myers, former Clinton mouthpiece. "The Republican hyperventilating is overdone," pronounced the *New York Times* editorial page. Joe Lockhart, another ex-Clinton spokesman who briefly flacked for Berger, told reporters that his client felt "a sense of injustice that after building a reputation as a tireless defender of his country that many Republicans would try to assassinate his character to pursue their own ends."

Others cast conspiratorial looks at the Bush White House. The Kerry campaign was deeply suspicious about "the timing of this leak." Lanny Davis, who as Berger's spinmeister may very well have leaked the news of Berger's pilfering himself—an art form perfected by Clinton aides for heading off damaging stories—chimed in on the same theme: "It's a week before the Democratic convention, and they know Kerry will get a bounce. They're doing everything they can to try to undermine that bounce." Ditto then-DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe: "The criminal investigation only came to light three days prior to the release of a report expected to be critical of the Bush administration's lack of focus on the events leading up to the 9/11 attacks." Likewise Hillary Clinton: "The timing speaks for itself," she said. Finally, there was the master of spin himself, Bill Clinton, who took a moment to comment on the Berger investigation during a book signing in Denver, Colorado, last July. "We were all laughing about it on the way over here," said Clinton, "People who don't know" Berger "might find it hard to believe" he'd make a mistake with classified materials. But "all of us who've been in his office have always found him buried beneath papers."

Don't hold your breath waiting for any reporters to notice that Berger's Republican critics have been vindicated. As the *Washington Post* went out of its way to note, Berger "did not put it in his socks or underwear, as was alleged by some Republicans last summer." ♦

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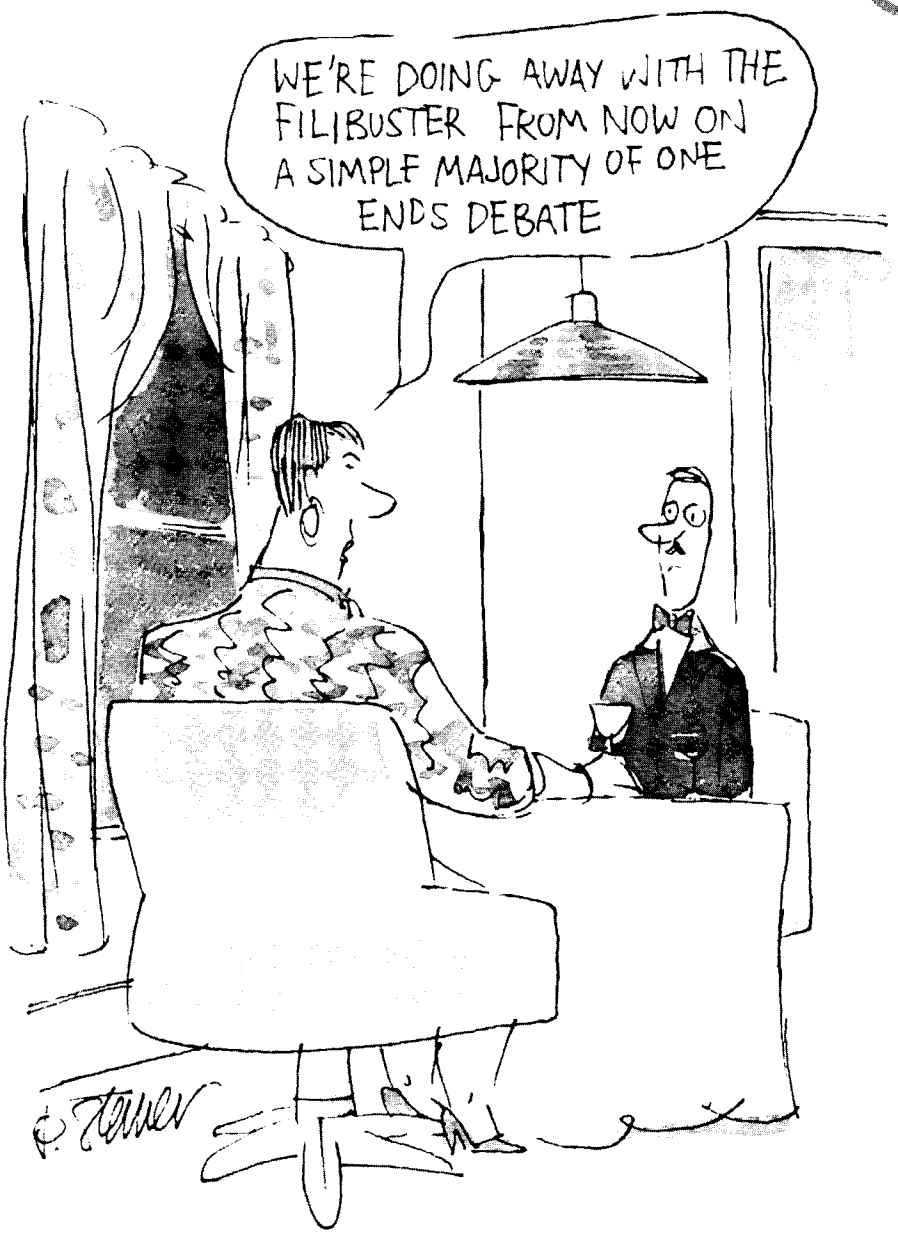

Who's Bashing Bolton?

John Bolton, undersecretary of state and current Bush nominee for ambassador to the United Nations, is "receiving so much bipartisan criticism that there is a widespread question about whether or not the administration was expecting the nomination to pass the Senate." So noted CBS News foreign affairs analyst Pamela Falk in a report last week on a letter opposing Bolton's appointment, signed by 59 former U.S. diplomats and sent to Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Much of the news coverage of the letter inanely treated the group as "bipartisan," noting that the former diplomats had "served in both Democratic and Republican administrations"—as is true of any Foreign Service officer with a career of normal duration. Which is to say, this fact tells you nothing special about the political views of the diplomats. As it happens, their politics run the gamut from left to farther left, and their letter is thus an ordinary partisan swipe at the nominee of a president they dislike. (Among other objections, they complain of Bolton's "exceptional record of opposition to efforts to enhance U.S. security through arms control." And we all remember how enhanced U.S. security was by efforts like SALT II. Don't we?)

The Scrapbook deputized an army of assistants (an army of one, actually) to tell us more about the signatories, because, while Senator Lugar surely recognizes each of the 59 names, Google struck out on quite a few. Our researcher told us the best source for biographical information on the 59 turned out to be a website called *politicalgraveyard.com*, specializing in political has-beens. Here one can learn, for example, that former senator Carol Mosley Braun, whose name we did remember, had also defended the interests of this country in both New Zealand and Samoa—a fact that we had forgotten and that does qualify her as a former ambassador, though not a particularly bipartisan one.

Further nuggets on the 59: Ambassador Henry Kimelman did a bang-up job as a Carter appointee in Haiti, but is perhaps better known for his work as chairman of the McGovern presidential committee in 1972. Ambassador William J. vanden Heuvel, Carter's ambassador to the U.N., has the distinction of having fathered Katrina, editor in chief of the *Nation*. Then there's the Honorable Terrell E. Arnold, another Carter appointee who later rose to deputy director of the State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Arnold contributed an op-ed piece to the *Washington Post* in 1988 with this memorable recommendation: "We must develop an open, restrained endurance of terrorist incidents."

Our advice to Sen. Lugar? Don't take advice from this lot. ♦

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Casual

Nat for Me

This is the week that Major League Baseball begins its new season. And, as everyone must know, Washington will have its own team for the first time in 34 years.

As a native of the Washington area, I ought to be transfixed with joy: After decades of valiant efforts, and more than a few heartbreaking near-misses, the city fathers managed to lure a team to the nation's capital. Or, more precisely, succeeded in persuading the commissioner to send the moribund Montreal Expos to Washington instead of killing them off.

Let there be no mistake: I am gratified that baseball is back in my hometown. I will attend a handful of games this season, linger momentarily over the sports pages, perhaps even purchase a souvenir or two. But, for whatever reason, I am not as ecstatic as I am supposed to be—or might have been, at some indeterminate point in the past.

Why? One reason may be politics. The last team to play in Washington was called the Senators, and Washingtonians always prayed for the Senators to return. But the mayor of the District of Columbia, one Anthony Williams, publicly complained that because Washington, D.C., does not have two senators in Congress, he was determined to prevent any Senators from playing in his stadium. So the new team will be called the Nationals, not the Senators. In truth, the Nationals is a historic name for the Washington team—headline writers used to abbreviate the Senators to the Nats—and things could have been worse. But I confess to a certain measure of disappointment, and resentment as well: Up until three years before his election as mayor, Anthony Williams was a resident of St. Louis, not Washington, and probably unaware of the Senators' existence.

Then, too, there is the minor irritation that the team has gone to excessive lengths to emphasize that it is a *Washington* club, not some gruesome suburban contrivance. Of course, the fact that the overwhelming majority of people buying tickets and attending games will come from Virginia or Maryland has not spoiled this particular angle. Not least, the uniforms feature "DC" on the players' hats and jerseys and, as any Cliff Dweller will tell you, DC is to Washington as Frisco is to San Francisco: a nickname designed to shatter a native's nerves.

Illustration by Darren Gygi

For me, I should say, there is one beacon of hope. For the next three years, the Nationals will play in Robert F. Kennedy Stadium, which is currently being refurbished for baseball. No modern restoration is complete, of course, without the sale of corporate naming rights, and sponsors are competitively bidding as I write. The Kennedy name, we are assured, will be retained and combined with the new moniker. As disheartened as I claim to be about the Nationals, I take some comfort in the hope that they will play for three seasons in the Robert F. Kennedy-Preparation H Stadium.

Which leads me, I suppose, to the fundamental reason for my troubling agnosticism. It is often forgotten that the Senators did not abandon Washington once, in their history, but twice. The club that departed for Texas in 1971 had, in fact, been a replacement team for the Senators who moved to Minnesota in 1961. Those old, original Washington Senators—the bumbling Nats of the '50s, first in war, first in peace, and last in the American League—were my team, for good or ill.

From the age of five or six, I followed their exploits with childish devotion. I closely read the box scores and accumulated cards and carefully monitored my favorite players. There were the outfielders, Jim Lemon and Roy Sievers and Bob Allison, third baseman Eddie Yost, catcher Clint (Scrap Iron) Courtney, pitchers Dick Hyde and Jimmy Constable and Camilio Pascual, and five-foot-five Albie Pearson, "the smallest man in baseball." Above all, there was the third baseman, and future Hall of Famer, Harmon Killebrew, the team's preeminent slugger. I have no idea what appealed to me about him—his unusual name might have had something to do with it—but I kept a color picture of him, cut from the pages of the *Washington Evening Star*, pasted on my closet door, and sought to imitate his swing when I stepped up to bat.

And then suddenly, at the end of the 1960 season, the Washington Senators became the Minnesota Twins. I wouldn't say that I was devastated by the news, but I was shocked and aggrieved, and found it difficult to transfer my allegiance to the new, expansion Senators. Let this be a lesson to owners who skip town, and trifle with the loyalty of small boys: On the day the old Senators abandoned Griffith Stadium, love died between me and Major League baseball.

Philip Terzian

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Specious on the Origin?

If Paul McHugh wants to make Darwin or "Darwinism" synonymous with evolution ("Teaching Darwin," March 28), that is of course a matter for him. Evolution is evidenced by the fossil record and by the study of molecular biology: We know, in other words, that it did take place, even if we are not yet certain how (and can dispense with the question of why).

Darwinism is not evolutionism: It was, rather, the first intelligible *theory* of evolution. Thus, not all serious seismologists agree, but all are (at least now) persuaded that the tectonic plates are the root cause. McHugh makes this obvious point in his own way, by discussing the scientific disagreement between Richard Dawkins and Stephen Jay Gould as if he had discovered it, and as if it proved his point rather than undermined it.

McHugh goes too far, however, in making the outrageous claim that "some evolutionary biologists" almost a century ago tried "to improve on the record by manufacturing the counterfeit fossil Piltdown Man." This famous hoax could not possibly have been designed to support the theory of evolution, since the fakery of the skull and the bones was so obvious as to discredit, if anything, the concept of a "missing link." The most celebrated suspects in the case were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who believed that it was possible to take photographs of fairies, and the somewhat heterodox Catholic paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin. We shall never know.

Meanwhile, however, it is often alleged on extreme fundamentalist websites that as many as 500 dissertations were written by evolutionists in support of, or endorsement of, the fraud. Not one such dissertation has ever come to light. One would like to think The Weekly Standard was not relying upon a reviewer who depended on such sources.

Christopher Hitchens
Washington, DC

Paul McHugh responds: These, I think, are Christopher Hitchens's main points. Evolution and the Darwinian theory of evolution are distinct concepts. The fossil and molecular records indicate the "fact" of evolution leaving uncertain the "how" of evolution. Dawkins and Gould agree on the root "fact" of evolution even though they disagree—presumably trivially—on the "how." And Piltdown Man was a "hoax" rather than a fraud. Everything else in his letter is smoke.

First: What's in contention is the "how" of evolution—specifically Darwin's claim that random variation and natural selection adequately provide this "how." Hitchens says Darwinism is a "theory" and, although "intelligible," "not yet certain." Why, then, quarrel with me or the people of Georgia who just want those views cited in science classrooms?

Second: Dawkins and Gould clash because they are addressing one of the few testable and falsifiable predictions of Darwinian theory. If random variation and natural selection explain species generation, says Darwin, then it must be slow, smooth, and gradual. Gould—and Eldredge—shows that the fossil record is "punctuated," specifically *not* slow, smooth, and gradual. They provoke Dawkins not because they deny evolution but because they render Darwin's "how" once again "not yet certain."

Finally: With Piltdown, Hitchens sees a "hoax" or easily discredited parody and considers my indictment of Darwinists in a fraud "outrageous." But hoaxers want everyone to know promptly how they have tricked the foolish "experts"—note Alan Sokal with the post-modernists. Scientific frauds, in contrast, support a line of investigation that the perpetrator believes will eventually bring more conclusive evidence to light. "Fake but accurate" is the resonant (and now familiar) idea in frauds. Darwinists produced the Piltdown Man and other Darwinists backed what Hitchens calls "obvious fakery" for 40 years. I'll stick to the indictment.

The Daily Show

In his March 21 review of Tom Fenton's new book about the decline of broadcast news in America ("Decline and Fall"), Bob Zelnick spends much time focused on Fenton's idea of a one-hour nightly network newscast and why it would never work.

In fact, a one-hour newscast can, and does, work. Each weekday evening more than 3 million viewers tune in to the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* on approximately 315 local PBS stations throughout the country. The *NewsHour*'s success is proof that, even in a tough media climate, a large and loyal audience exists for thoughtful, balanced, and objective reporting and analysis of national and international events.

Dan Werner
President, MacNeil/Lehrer Productions
Arlington, VA

Revival

Does Daniel Sullivan's "The Heart Specialist" (March 21) herald the long overdue reemergence of Jonathan Edwards to the forefront of American culture and thought? While the premise of Sullivan's article is a review of Philip F. Gura's new biography of Edwards, it is at least the second article I have read recently about the legendary minister.

Although I'm always cautious of possible revisionist cultural history, Edwards has often been forgotten or discredited, and I am glad to see him paid some due respect. Many years ago, I remember learning about Edwards in public school along with the Salem Witch trials, the works of the late (but not-so-great) Arthur Miller, and, of course, that dastardly Joe McCarthy. I was brainwashed

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into believing Edwards marked the epitome of extremism.

I'm glad to see writers like Sullivan and Gura proving this notion wrong and restoring credit to one of America's most influential cultural and spiritual leaders.

JONATHAN EDWARD OSBORNE
Smyrna, GA

JUDGING THE JUDGES

I COMMEND TERRY EASTLAND for his excellent "They Shalt Not" (March 14). However, the idea that the majority of the Supreme Court will decide the Ten Commandments issue based on a principled interpretation of the Constitution is wishful thinking. If the Court does the right thing in this instance, it will be the consequence of political pressure and nothing else.

It would indeed be very hard, as Eastland indicates, to discern within the Constitution a "Thou shalt not display the Ten Commandments in the public square" clause, but the Court long since abandoned a reasonable interpretation of the Constitution. Today, the Court increasingly seems to make up laws based on a majority of the justices' personal philosophies and political prejudices.

If the Framers of the Constitution were negligent in any respect, it was in failing to place sufficient constitutional restraints on the federal judiciary. The Framers wanted to preserve the independence of the judiciary, and they presumed that the majority of judges would be principled. *Federalist* 78 makes the Framers' intent explicit. It also warns that if judges exercised "will instead of judgment, the consequence would . . . be the substitution of their pleasure to that of the legislative body." What the Framers feared has in fact happened—many court opinions from the last 50 years reflect untrammeled judicial arrogance.

It is time to impose the restraints on our judicial oligarchy that the oligarchs will not place on themselves. If we are to preserve the democratic process in this country, then we must amend the Constitution—the sooner the better.

GARY INBINDER
Woodland Hills, CA

SPITZER SPAT

MATTHEW CONTINETTI'S "I, Eliot" (March 7) properly asked, What does Eliot Spitzer really stand for?

As a former shareholder in Alliance Capital (AC), I was made painfully aware of what Spitzer really stands for. When Spitzer negotiated his sweetheart settlement with AC's corporate management, he closed his eyes to the fact that AC's shareholders would bear the cost of the deal. Although we had committed no crime, nor even an ethical breach, Spitzer's deal cost me and my fellow AC shareholders half a year's dividends.

By contrast, the senior corporate managers—i.e., the culpable parties whose neglect had facilitated AC's criminal fund timing activity—paid no penalty whatsoever. Spitzer thereby made it clear that he placed no value on the losses he imposed on the innocent—as long as he could rake in the headlines.

GERALD S. WASSERMAN
Lafayette, IN

CARTEL BLANCHE

I FOUND IT PUZZLING that mention of Iraqi and American support for OPEC was missing from both Irwin M. Stelzer's "The Axis of Oil" (Feb. 7) and the reply letter from Matthew McManus of the U.S. State Department.

The U.S. government has been a de facto member of OPEC since April 2003, when the Coalition Provisional Authority took over the governance of Iraq. Now the State Department has a force of some 3,000 administrators at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. Plenty of them are directing the Iraqi oil industry.

The Iraqi/U.S. delegate to OPEC has always voted for all the oil production quotas. The Bush administration seems to think it has a moral duty to bolster the oil cartel regardless of its effect on the American public.

We think the U.S. government should not help any cartel anywhere in the world.

CARL OLSON
Chairman, State Department Watch
Washington, DC

SWISS ARMY OF ONE

I READ WITH INTEREST Irwin M. Stelzer's "Germany and the F-Word" (March 21). I am a teacher in Geneva, Switzerland—maybe the only European teacher reading THE WEEKLY STANDARD in the *salle des maîtres*.

Unfortunately, my colleagues also prefer "stability" to disturbing the status quo by trying to spread "freedom." It is impossible to have a free talk about U.S. policy, but I take the risk every day. Is the reason for this that the Swiss people have never lived under tyranny (aside from the tyranny of political correctness)?

Hoping to be alive for your next issue.

MARC FISCHER
Geneva, Switzerland

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the weekly Standard

Life of the Party

The words of Hubert Humphrey became the motto of American liberalism almost from the moment he uttered them on the Senate floor in 1977. "The moral test of a government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life—the children; the twilight of life—the elderly; and the shadows of life—the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." Liberal Democrats embraced the Humphrey dictum as a measure of what they'd done and what they planned to do. This was the high moral ground they thought of as the Democratic party's exclusive heritage.

It no longer is. The indifference of liberalism to the fate of Terri Schiavo, by itself, demonstrates that. Those in the dawn of life and those in the shadows do not have advocates in liberalism and the Democratic party, at least not many. More often the weak and the innocent are targets. Democrats and liberals have fled the moral high ground, and they've done so voluntarily.

What was liberalism's response to the plight of Schiavo, the Florida woman forced to die last week? Some Democrats—Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa stands out—aided Republicans in putting the Schiavo case in federal court and giving her a chance to live. But for most, the issue was not that a woman who was brain-damaged, and whose parents wanted to care for her, was being put to death. No, the issue was procedural. The rule of law and the requirements of federalism supposedly barred intervention by Congress or federal courts in the case. States' rights suddenly became a tenet of modern liberalism. In effect, liberalism washed its hands of Schiavo, the epitome of someone in the "shadows of life." Sick, needy, and handicapped? She was all three.

At the "dawn of life," no one is more vulnerable than an unborn child. Yet liberals' lack of sympathy for the unborn has become so deep-seated that late-term abortions, which amount to infanticide, fail to provoke their moral outrage. The evidence is clear now that the vast majority of partial-birth abortions are performed for convenience, not because of any threat to the health of the mother. Thus the health exception for partial-birth abortions has become solely a loophole exploited to justify the killing of unborn children on the brink of life. This fact is not a secret. Still, the dominant liberal elements of the Democratic party (along with some Republicans) cling to the idea that a health exception must be preserved.

Though Humphrey's maxim didn't touch on foreign policy, liberalism has jettisoned its moral heritage there, too. FDR, Truman, and JFK all hailed the spread of liberty as the hallmark of a liberal foreign policy. Today, however, liberals and Democrats find no joy in the success of President Bush's drive for democracy in the Middle East, success they had deemed impossible or perhaps undesirable. Instead, they have adopted, in the words of *New Republic* editor-in-chief Martin Peretz, "the politics of churlishness" toward the advance of democracy. Again, not all Democrats have, just most of them.

There's a political lesson in all this—for Republicans as well as Democrats. It's hardly a coincidence that the electoral fortunes of the Democratic party have declined as it turned away from its traditional focus on moral issues. It has ceded the White House, Congress, and a majority of statehouses. It has become the party of liberal interest groups, the party of reaction, and the party of process. Rather than take up moral issues, Democrats are more likely to dismiss them as scary obsessions of the religious right. This is a political mistake of considerable magnitude.

In the 1990s, Democrats calculated that attacks on Republicans for opposing unfettered abortion would produce electoral dividends. Quite the opposite occurred. In 2004, they thought Bush's policy of limiting federal support of embryonic stem-cell research and seeking to ban so-called therapeutic cloning would be an albatross to his reelection campaign. It wasn't.

For conservatives and Republicans, the lesson should be obvious. There's no reason to fear being the champion of the weak and the poor. The party's rise over the past decade is linked to its growing attention to the moral issues this role entails. True, abortion, euthanasia, and other moral problems make many Americans uncomfortable. And these issues often poll poorly. But they have a resonance that is unmistakable. The crusade to uproot slavery was opposed by all the South and half the North. Yet it

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made Republicans the majority party for more than 70 years. The civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s was far less popular than is widely remembered. But Democratic presidents who took on the cause of civil rights solidified their party's moral self-confidence.

Now Republicans have an opportunity to be the party that rises to meet the Humphrey challenge. They've gained by opposing a seemingly popular issue like abortion rights, and they stand to gain more, ultimately, by defending the right to life of people like Terri Schiavo. Of course, moral issues alone, while important, won't suffice. Republicans will have to broaden the reach of Bush's compassionate conservatism. But with Democrats having abdicated, there's no reason for Republicans to balk at occupying the moral high ground.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

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"Hell, No"—He's Not Exonerated

Kofi Annan and the Oil-for-Food investigation.

BY CLAUDIA ROSETT

IN THE EPIC United Nations Oil-for-Food scandal, we now have a moment of high farce, with what will surely be remembered as Kofi Annan's "Hell, no" press conference—named for the secretary general's belligerent answer on March 29 to a reporter who, quite appropriately, wondered if Annan shouldn't think about resigning sometime soon. The U.N.-authorized inquiry into Oil-for-Food wrongdoing, led by former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, clocked in last Tuesday with its second interim report on a program now infamous as the biggest fraud in the history of humanitarian aid. That same afternoon, Annan summoned the media to the blue-curtained U.N. briefing room to announce his great relief at "this exoneration."

What exoneration? Despite its scores of investigators, $30 million budget, and more than 10 months on the job, the Volcker inquiry has addressed only a few narrow issues. The focus of this second interim report was Annan's role in the U.N.'s hiring in 1998 of an Oil-for-Food contractor, Swiss-based Cotecna Inspection, S.A., which employed Kofi Annan's son, Kojo, as a consultant, while bidding on the lucrative U.N. contract to inspect Oil-for-Food imports in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Cotecna, coincident with its U.N. labors, kept paying Kojo Annan from 1999 through early 2004, five years after he had quit. These are intriguing matters. But Volcker has yet to address the bulk of the Oil-for-Food program, and his final report is not expected till mid-summer. It was Annan himself who just last year was urging all and sundry to wait for Volcker's final word before reaching any conclusions.

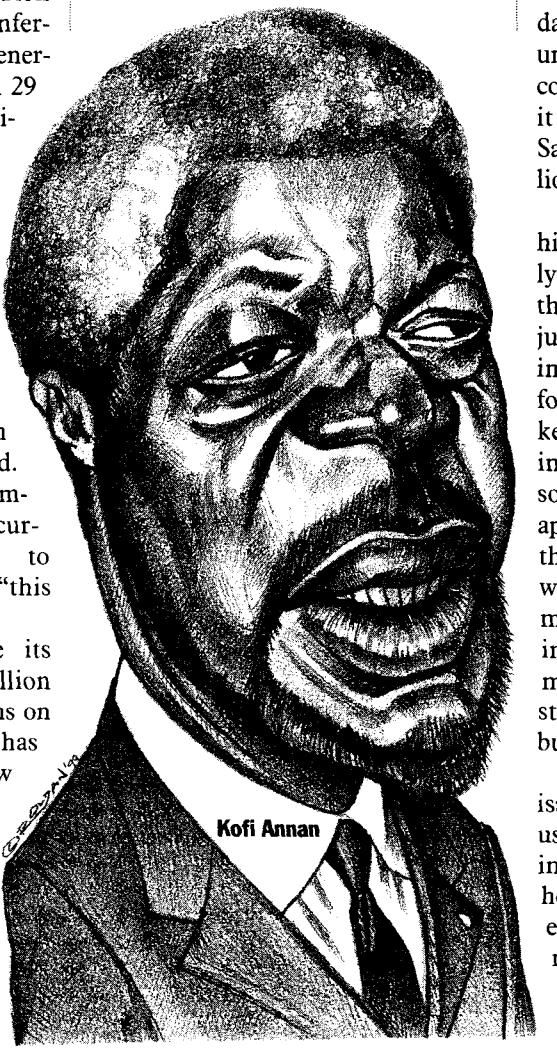

Illustration by Ismael Roldan

Now, in his rush to exonerate himself, the secretary general seems to have forgotten that Oil-for-Food was a vast endeavor, running from 1996 to 2003, in which the United Nations, in the name of providing for the sanctions-squeezed people of Iraq, oversaw more than $110 billion worth of Saddam Hussein's oil sales and relief purchases, much of that riddled with billions in graft. All but the first month of this exercise was administered and —in the words of one of Annan's spokesman—"audited to death" by Annan's Secretariat. It was Annan who personally signed off on Saddam's shopping lists, and repeatedly urged the Security Council not only to continue the program, but to expand it in size and scope, which allowed Saddam to rake in yet more illicit billions from oil smuggling.

If Annan has indeed lost sight of his own oversight role, it would hardly be the only such lapse turned up in this inquiry. What emerges from the jumbled narrative of the Volcker interim report is a U.N. universe of forgetful officials, botched record-keeping, cronyism, and conflicts of interest so abundant they start to sound simply routine—which they apparently were. Most noteworthy is the volume of damning information whitewashed by bland wording, culminating in Volcker's judgment that in some respects Annan's performance was "inadequate." By such standards, the *Titanic* was "non-buoyant."

As with the earlier interim report, issued in February, Volcker informs us that his team has found no smoking gun. But there's enough smoke here to leave you wondering if Volcker's team should have been looking not for a gun but, instead, for a roomful of U.N. shredders, flaming out from overuse.

As it happens, the Oil-for-Food scandal does indeed feature a shredder. Among the findings of this Volcker installment is that in April 2004, just as the inquiry was pulling itself together and after Annan had promised that all documentation would be preserved, Annan's former

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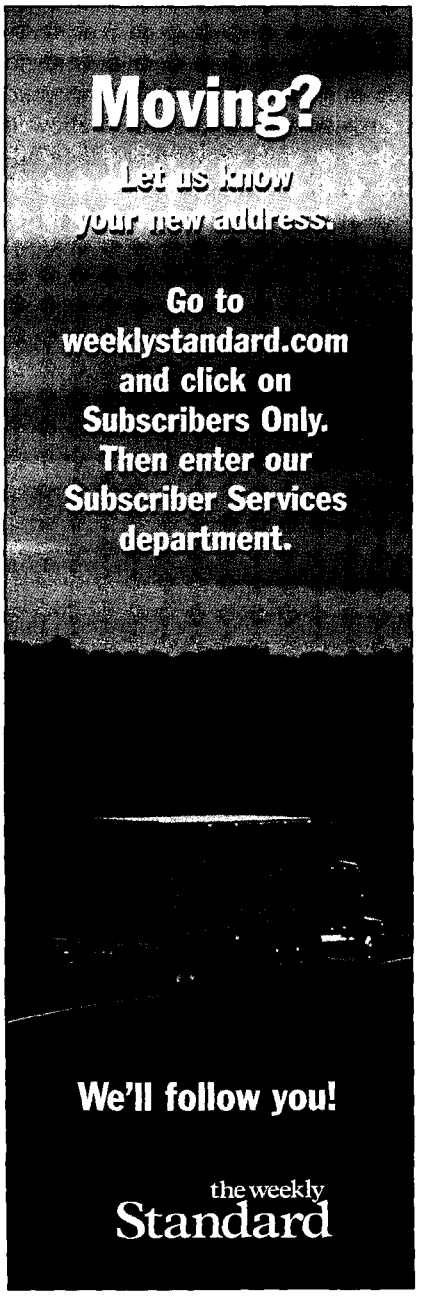
chief of staff, Iqbal Riza, approved a request from his secretary to shred some files covering precisely the period under investigation in this interim report, from 1997 to 1999. The reason given was to clear space. As described in the report, the shredding went on for more than seven months, ending in December—a process we are told Riza somehow failed to notice.

Then there's Volcker's finding, after poking through the available shreds and cinders, that there is "no evidence" Kofi Annan interfered improperly in the U.N.'s awarding of the Iraq contract to Cotecna. But there is plenty of evidence that Kofi Annan—contrary to his public pose of bewildered ignorance—had plenty of reasons to ponder possible connections among Cotecna, his son, and U.N. business.



Kofi Annan first dealt with Cotecna during U.N. talks in the early 1990s over setting up an Oil-for-Food type program—before the program finally began in 1996. It was Kofi Annan who, via a Cotecna employee named Michael Wilson, son of an old Annan family friend, helped young Kojo land his original job with Cotecna back in 1995. Annan Senior met twice with Cotecna CEO Elie Massey, first for cocktails in Switzerland in 1997, and, more suggestively, in September 1998 at U.N. headquarters in New York, a time when Kojo Annan was pressing Cotecna business at U.N. gatherings. For this appointment, the preliminary entry on Kofi Annan's calendar read: "Kojo—Mr. Massey (private)."

When a report surfaced in the London *Sunday Telegraph* in early 1999 that Kojo had remained on the Cotecna payroll while the company was submitting its winning bid in late 1998 for the U.N. contract, it was the old Annan family chum, Wilson, at Cotecna—not an impartial oversight body—to whom Kofi Annan turned first for information. The secretary general then asked his staff to look into the matter. They turned around a report that same day, clearing Kojo of any questionable or continuing dealings with Cotecna. The press—as late as last year—was told by Annan's office to lay off, that the 1999 U.N. internal report was the final word.

As it turns out, Kojo, by Volcker's account, then received from Cotecna some $484,492 over the next five years, coincident with the company's work for the U.N. Cotecna claims the payments came to no more than $160,800. Whatever. We are treated in this report to Annan's vague speculation that he himself might have somehow been the source for the U.N. internal report clearing his own son. Asked about this possibility by the Volcker team last December, Annan gave an answer that belongs right up there in the pantheon with President Clinton's definition of "is." "It's possible that I did—I don't recall," said Annan, adding, "I sort of may have mentioned that this is what I have been told."

The oddities detailed in this report hardly end there. It turns out, for example, that—never mind Kojo—the head of Cotecna, Elie Massey, sent Kofi Annan a letter in 2002, asking that the secretary general intervene to stop Ghana from dropping a Cotecna contract. Annan's response was not to ignore or return the letter—but to forward it to the ambassador of Ghana. This was an action that by any ordinary lights implied an endorsement from the U.N. secretary general. The exonerating circumstances in this case seem to be that Ghana in any event went ahead and scrapped its Cotecna contract. We are left with a scene in which the secretary general engaged in a clear conflict of interest, but is implicitly excused on grounds that it did not pay off.

Then there was Kojo Annan's habit, recorded in this report, of dropping by the U.N. Procurement Division, where he liked to tinker with the computers and visit another old family friend, Diana Mills-Aryee, who worked there. While Volcker found no evidence Kojo did anything wrong during these visits, he did turn up an intriguing email from Kojo to Mills-Aryee (whom he liked to address as "Dear Aunty"), dated June 1999, informing her that one of his companies, Sutton Investments, "currently consult for or are associated with" Cotecna, and concluding, "Don't worry Aunty your son will structure your early retirement."

Such is a sampling of the contents of this report, with which Kofi Annan now deems himself cleared in relation to Oil-for-Food. At the "Hell, no" press conference, Annan took precisely three questions before announcing he had "lots of work to do," and departing the room at speed. How much more of this man's work can the U.N. survive? ♦

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The Legacy of Terri Schiavo

What we can do so this won't happen again.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

TERRI SCHIAVO IS DEAD. But her death by dehydration last week need not be in vain. Great good can still come from the harsh, two week ordeal she—and to a lesser extent, we—were forced to undergo by court order.

Terri's story generated a torrent of compassion. (The root meaning of compassion is to "suffer with," which is precisely what her legions of supporters did.) Hundreds of thousands of people who had never participated before in a major public event engaged untiringly in advocating for the sanctity and equal moral worth of the life of Terri Schiavo. And these many supporters were not, as the mainstream media took great glee in portraying, limited to the Randall Terry brand of religious activist or to orthodox Catholics. To the contrary, notables of the secular and religious left—Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson, Nat Hentoff—joined in solidarity with their usual conservative opponents, such as President George W. Bush, Senator Bill Frist, and Rush Limbaugh, to declare that Terri should live.

This suggests that deep political divisions can be overcome, at least for a time, in pursuit of a public morality that was sorely missing in the Terri Schiavo saga. Indeed, if Terri's supporters channel their passion into productive democratic reform, we can almost surely prevent future such miscarriages of justice.

What would such reforms look like? While great care should be taken in this important matter, here are a few initial suggestions:

• First, as it is the law of the land to prevent discrimination against disabled people via the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), then surely these protections should apply explicitly where they are needed most desperately, in medical situations where discrimination can have lethal consequences. Obviously, legislation would have to be carefully worded to prevent overreaching and unintended consequences. But disabled people need to be able to enter hospitals and other medical institutions secure in the knowledge that the law requires their lives be just as valued and protected as those of patients who are not disabled. As matters stand now, some disabled people fear hospitalization precisely because they worry that their lives will be judged as being of insufficient quality to be sustained. The Terri Schiavo case exacerbates those fears.

• States need to review their laws of informed consent and refusal of medical treatment to ensure that casual conversations—the basis for Terri's death order—are never again deemed to be the legal equivalent of a well-thought-out, written advance medical directive. We don't permit the property of the deceased to be distributed based on their oral statements; surely human lives deserve as much protection.

• If people don't want feeding tubes if they become profoundly incapacitated, the law permits them to refuse such care. That isn't going to change. But if that is their desire, they have the responsibility to make sure that such wishes are put in a legally binding document. Absent that, the law should require the courts in contested cases to give every reasonable benefit of the doubt to sustaining life and not causing death by dehydration.

• Along these lines, our laws should be more nuanced. When people claim they would want the "plug pulled," many are worrying about being tethered to beeping machines in sterile intensive care units, not expressing a desire to be slowly dehydrated to death over 10-14 days. In the face of this potential misapprehension, we should create a distinction in law between food and water supplied through a tube and other forms of medical care. Withholding a respirator or antibiotics can lead to uncertain results. Take away anyone's food and water and they *will* die.

• Judge George Greer's embrace of Michael Schiavo's legal status as "husband" to Terri in the face of the pronounced personal and financial conflicts of interest he faced in making her life and death decisions may not require an explicit change of law. But surely we have every right to demand that judges remain acutely sensitive to changes in circumstances that often emerge over time in situations faced by families like Terri's. Why Judge Greer did not think it a matter of grave import that Michael had two children with another woman, even as he petitioned the court to hasten the day when death would part him from his wedded wife, will always be a source of bitter wonder to Terri's supporters.

As Terri's family made clear in their dignified public statement after her death, it would dishonor her memory for her supporters to indulge in hatred. Michael Schiavo, George Felos, and Judge George Greer aren't worth the psychic cost. How much better to honor Terri's memory by enacting a series of legal reforms that rededicate our society to standing for the equal moral worth and unwavering legal protection of the most weak and vulnerable among us. ♦

Wesley J. Smith is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, an attorney for the International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, and a special consultant to the Center for Bioethics and Culture. His latest book is Consumer's Guide to a Brave New World.

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The Kyrgyz Take Their Stan

A democratic revolution in Central Asia?

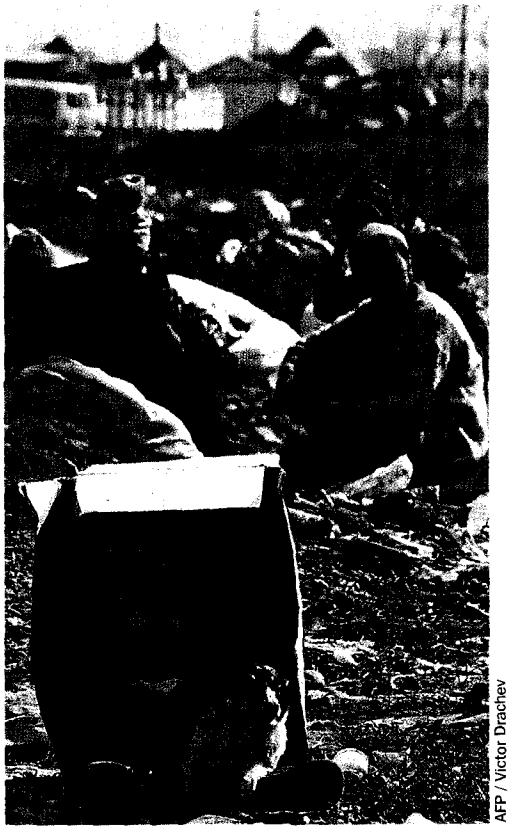
BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

THE FINAL OUTCOME of the Tulip Revolution—as the political upheaval in Kyrgyzstan has been dubbed—remains murky. But its historic and geopolitical significance is already clear.

After the democratic transformations of Georgia and especially Ukraine, it became obvious that the former Soviet republics of Central Asia would be the next area of ferment. When I visited Central Asia last December, the example of Ukraine was an understated but persistent topic of conversation.

Kyrgyzstan, with five million people, is the smallest and weakest of the chain of post-Communist independent states in the region. The ex-Soviet "stans" comprise Uzbekistan, largest in population; Kazakhstan, largest in area and with the highest standard of living; Turkmenistan, with the worst political regime but economic advantages thanks to its energy industry; Tajikistan, torn apart by a civil war that drew Wahhabi extremist warriors from Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, and the only one of the five with a Persian, non-Turkic, culture; and the smallest, Kyrgyzstan, several times in its history a victim of invasion by its Chinese and Mongolian neighbors.

Its high mountains, the Tien Shan or Heavenly Peaks marking the frontier with China, earned Kyrgyzstan the nickname "the Switzerland of Central Asia." Like the Helvetian republic, it has enjoyed peace over the past decade, having been spared the religious conflicts that erupted between Islamists and post-Communists in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, to say nothing of the horrors in nearby Afghanistan. Along with Uzbekistan, it established a new relationship with the United States, permitting an airbase on its territory.



AFP / Victor Drachev

Bishkek boy and his dog: poor Kyrgyz at the city dump

But even during its years under Soviet rule, Kyrgyzstan retained a firm memory of historic, resolute defiance of Russian domination, which always made it something of a ticking time bomb. Similarly, the Georgians, rather amazingly, never forgot that their independent republic, led by Mensheviks, or moderate social democrats, had been forcibly overthrown by Bolsheviks in 1921. The Ukrainians had been dragged into the Soviet Union in 1922, and their nationalism was and remains pronounced.

For their part, the Kyrgyz recall how in 1916, after only 50 years of Slav colonization, they rebelled against conscription by the Tsarist army. Some 150,000 Kyrgyz were killed by Russian settlers and punitive troops in what amounted to a vast race riot. Thirty percent of the Kyrgyz population was dead by 1920, many of whom starved while fleeing to China.

When communism fell in 1991, the Kyrgyz, as a nation, resembled Rip Van Winkle, blinking in the bright daylight of independence after a long sleep. They had always had an anti-authoritarian streak, unlike the Uzbeks who submitted to cruel khans, and the Kazakhs who accepted an alliance with Russia, in the 18th century, as an alternative to the rapacity of Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist raiders. Also unlike the Uzbeks, they were never formalistic or punctilious about their Islam.

Although, like nearly all the Turkic peoples, the Kyrgyz accepted the faith of Muhammad, their religion rested lightly on a considerable body of shamanistic and tribal tradition brought centuries before from Siberia. The Islamist ideological movement Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), or the Liberation party, has infiltrated southern Kyrgyzstan, where it appeals to a significant and aggrieved Uzbek minority, but Kyrgyz Muslims are cold to such blandishments, and the threat of HuT has been grossly exaggerated by the Russian government and others.

Given their independent spirit and commitment to hard work, it is no wonder the Kyrgyz found the legacy of Soviet communism, and the failure of their government to assure entre-

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EPA Photos / Sergei Chirikov

An old Kyrgyz man, in traditional dress, shakes his fist at police guarding the parliament entrance, Bishkek, March 28.

preneurial opportunities, unbearable. Soon after independence, their president, Askar Akayev, a scientist rather than a Communist bureaucrat, and in power since 1990, promised a transition to democracy. But Akayev, like other leaders in the region, soon forgot his reforming pledges, and thus reignited the fire of rebellion in Kyrgyz hearts.

A new phase in the history of the region began in February when Kyrgyz elections were held, but opposition and independent candidates were banned. On March 24, after a second round of voting perpetuated the restrictions on the ballot, anger overflowed. Rebels suddenly appeared and took over major cities, then seized the presidential White House. Akayev was driven out of Bishkek, the capital, and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, prime minister in 2001 and 2002, assumed power as acting chief executive. Akayev reportedly went to Russia to resume his scientific career but has delayed his official resignation.

Still, interim authorities promised to hold new elections for the presidency in June. Bakiyev is said to be the most popular opposition leader, along with Felix Kulov, who took over security duties and is outspokenly pro-American. A woman, Roza Otunbayeva, became a leading organizer of the popular uprising.

Unfortunately, Kyrgyz frustration exploded in rioting and looting, which quickly stopped when thousands of Bishkek citizens, mobilized by Kulov, assisted police in restoring order; no state of emergency was ordered in the capital. Otunbayeva alleges that partisans of the old regime mobilized criminals and thugs to upset the reform process, an old political tactic in the Russian empire.

The geographical importance of the Tulip Revolution mainly originates in the jigsaw arrangement of borders in the Fergana Valley, a rich agricultural region carved up by the Soviets between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Fergana has an Uzbek majority and a strong orientation toward traditional Islam, and has been a magnet for Wahhabi missionaries, HuT's sectarian radicals, and recruiters for the al Qaeda-allied Islamic Movement of Turkestan (IMT), which has slid into decline since the destruction of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

But Kyrgyzstan potentially has even broader significance. There is no reason Kyrgyz people should not aspire to the same social and economic advances—a free market economy, representative and accountable institutions, free media—now emerging in Georgia and Ukraine. The Tulip Revolution may spell the beginning of a cautious but authentic transition throughout the region. For just that reason, apparently, coverage of the Kyrgyz upheaval was barred from media in neighboring Kazakhstan, with Internet access blocked along with television and radio coverage. This was surprising, since Kazakhstan, the least oppressive dictatorship in Central Asia, in fact boasts a genuinely independent media. Still, Kazakh ruler Nursultan Nazarbayev briefly threatened, if in ambiguous language, to intervene in Kyrgyzstan.

The Kyrgyz revolution may not only undermine the neighboring post-Soviet governments in Central Asia, but may also produce a kind of double-ringed encirclement. Democratization in the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union could stir citizen activism in Russia itself, but

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also in the Arab core of the Muslim world.

Seeking to maintain Russian influence in Kyrgyzstan, Vladimir Putin and his leftist-fascist defenders around the world—following a pattern set in Ukraine, although applied less stridently in the Kyrgyz case—have spread conspiracy propaganda blaming all the democratic movements in the former Soviet Union on American interference. They project a vast, malign network involving, on one side, George Soros, and on the other, Freedom House, with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute acting as auxiliary conspirators. This disinformation reminds one of the sheriffs in the American South during the 1950s and 1960s who complained about "outside agitators" stirring up trouble among their tranquil black subjects.

In reality, Kyrgyzstan may benefit from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's decision to take an active role in its affairs, despite the OSCE's less-than-brilliant record in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Kosovo. Luckily for its members and global partners, the OSCE is now headed by chairman-in-office Dimitrij Rupel, a politician from Slovenia, perhaps the most successful of all the post-Communist transition states. But the job of restoring order in the wake of a crumbling dictatorship may not be easy to finish, as the fire of freedom has a way of spreading, and the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan movements have already stirred protests in Belarus, one of the worst-ruled states in the former Soviet area.

The end of the cycle of transformation in the former Communist world and the commencement of bourgeois democratization in the Muslim nations could possibly generate a global wave of liberation. If so, President George W. Bush will be remembered as an even greater champion of the cause of freedom than Ronald Reagan. We'll have to wait and see if a thousand tulips bloom. ♦

A Chip Off the Old Dictator

Bashar al-Assad is unlikely to go quietly from Lebanon. BY LEE SMITH

THE CEDAR REVOLUTION has taken so many interesting narrative turns, it is easy to forget that the Lebanese opposition confronts a criminal regime in Syria that is more isolated than ever and for that reason quite possibly more dangerous than before. While some repentant skeptics have grudgingly begun to credit the Bush vision for democracy in the Middle East, the White House has prudently refrained from gloating because the outcome is far from resolved. For all the appeasing noises the Damascus regime has made, it may decide not to leave Lebanon without a fight. Some analysts believe that Bashar al-Assad cannot leave Lebanon lest his government fall, and others fear that he will depart only after he has set Lebanon aflame.

While Syria's foreign minister announced last week that the country's armed forces will be pulled out before Lebanon's May parliamentary elections, the pro-Syrian government in Beirut has initiated stalling tactics that could postpone the elections and consequently the Syrian withdrawal. The Syrian-controlled security apparatus appears to be in a state of disarray, but even when, or if, the Assad regime evacuates, it will continue to exercise considerable influence over Lebanese politics and the economy through the myriad intelligence services that have penetrated virtually every Lebanese institution over the last 15 years. Thus, even if Syria withdraws, Assad will continue to be a major force in Lebanese affairs.

Jacques Chirac reportedly has warned the White House that the Assad regime cannot afford to withdraw without risking collapse. A recent report in the *Beirut Daily Star* estimates that Syria earns more than $2 billion a year in Lebanon, almost half of which goes directly to Assad favorites. This number doesn't include revenues earned from illegal sources, like narcotics. Perhaps as significantly, Syria's regional prestige will take a major hit. The last Arab nationalist stronghold will have been chased from another Arab country by Western powers that didn't fire a shot. Maybe Iran will not brook a Syrian ally that is feeble. And if Iraq or Saudi Arabia smells fear in Damascus, Assad might expect a Sunni insurgency like the one he's assisted in Iraq to rise up at home against his Alawite regime. Further, a peaceable withdrawal from Lebanon means Syria will have lost what it considers its major bargaining chip in securing one of its key national interests—the return of the Golan Heights from Israeli control.

No one knows for certain whether the three bombings in Christian areas over the last few weeks were engineered by Syrian intelligence, local allies, or by other Lebanese actors who believe they can profit from the confusion. Regardless, there is concern that Assad intends to make good on his threat to bring armageddon to Lebanon, just to remind everyone who's in control, no matter what side of the border his troops are stationed on. This is the scenario that everyone fears.

"If the Syrians are willing to play it clean, the U.S. and the Europeans are not seeking to attack them," says Farid al-Khazen, an opposition can-

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AP / Hussein Malla

Pro-Syrian protesters in Beirut; the large portraits show Bashar al-Assad (left) and his father Hafez.

didate in the May elections and dean of the political science department at the American University of Beirut. "Ironically, what would be best for the [Assad] regime is if it fully implemented [U.N. Security Council resolution] 1559. Before, Syria was in trouble over Iraq; now its survival depends on how much it is willing to cooperate in Lebanon."

It was Bashar's continued support of the Iraqi insurgency that, well before the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri, led many observers to wonder if the novice dictator was in over his head. Perhaps so, but his presumed weakness has afforded him a gambit unavailable to his late father, Hafez, with whom he is so frequently and unfavorably compared. Bashar has managed to convince many people inside and outside of Syria that he is hostage to his father's "old guard." People want to believe this is so because they had hoped the young, Western-educated, computer-literate president would be a real reformer. But if the "old guard" has prevented him from implementing internal reforms for five years, they did not stop him from appointing his brother-in-law Asef Shawkat chief of military intelligence, the top security position in the country, immediately after the Hariri murder.

To banish or kill your enemies and circle the wagons with relatives and tribal associates is a principle favored by all Arab regimes. Syria is a family business, and even without the aura and experience of his father, Bashar runs it very much the way the old man did. Bashar is thought dim-witted because he has backed the Iraqi insurgency and Palestinian terrorist groups despite U.S. warnings, and because he overplayed his hand in Lebanon. But what would Hafez have done in the same circumstances?

It is true that Hafez signed on for the first U.S.-led Gulf War in 1991, but if that Bush White House had decided to depose Saddam and maintain a large presence in neighboring Iraq Hafez would have perceived it as his son now does—a violation of his sphere of influence. "He would've stayed out of the war and supported an insurgency," says Khazen. Bashar is only following the example Hafez set when he backed groups that killed and kidnapped Americans in Lebanon in the 1980s.

Bashar, like his father before him, aids Palestinian terror groups for two reasons: First, Syria has always considered Palestine a national interest, if not in fact a part of Syria; second, as a way to pressure Israel to return the Golan Heights, which Syria lost in the 1967 war when Hafez was defense minister. Perhaps Bashar is foolish to assume the burden of his father's legacy, but that doesn't make him less flexible than the man who made the recovery of territory that he'd lost the cornerstone of his foreign policy for 30 years.

No one ever bothered when Hafez tampered with Lebanese election laws or targeted political figures. Why would Bashar think that his doing so would galvanize world opinion against him? As far as the international community was concerned, what happened in Lebanon stayed in Lebanon. The United States, among many others, agreed to look the other way. And here it's worth noting that many of the Western officials busily explaining to the press that Bashar is not as smart as his brilliant father have a vested interest in promoting the idea. If Hafez was not a tough negotiator/tactical genius/legendary trickster figure, then they were just easy marks for a typical Arab dictator. After all, we rewarded Hafez for his "pragmatic" decision to join the first Gulf War by giving him a free hand in Lebanon.

The significant difference is not between Assad 1 and Assad 2, but rather Bush 1 and Bush 2. Only a few Arab rulers have been able to comprehend how thoroughly 9/11 changed U.S. foreign policy. Being unelected themselves, most Arab leaders are not in the habit of thinking deeply about how democratically elected governments are accountable to their citizens. The catch is that since Arab rulers do not have to answer to popu-

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lar constituencies, they can absorb blows that liberal democracies cannot. Hafez, for one, reigned for three decades after he lost the Golan. If Bashar really is like his father, he will get through this very rough spot slightly humiliated, but without any fatal internal challenges to his power.

To be sure, the regime has floated frightening tales about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism within its borders. Mostly this is intended to put the fear of God into Western officials, should they be tempted to try to push Assad from his perch. But no one really knows how much power Syria's Muslim Brotherhood wields. Even the ordinary Sunnis—a clear majority of Syrians—seem to be fairly satisfied with their lot under an Alawite regime at a time when the region's magic words are "free elections." If Syrians do want their regime changed, by hands foreign or domestic, they are disguising their wishes well. Remember that Hafez's 30-year rule followed several decades of coups and counter-coups. It should not be surprising if Syrians want stability. At this point, however, it's not just a matter of what Syrians want.

Last month, several hundred thousand turned out for a pro-regime march in Damascus, and while much of the fanfare, and attendance, was no doubt orchestrated, many Syrians really do seem to believe that Bashar wants to reform their country. And that's what he ought to be doing, addressing the country's dire economic situation and daunting minority issues and making life better for Syrians. Instead, he is making it miserable for Iraqis, American soldiers and civilian officials, Israelis, Palestinians, and Lebanese. He is counting on continued military, diplomatic, and political problems (which he will nurture) to keep the United States busy in Iraq and Israel, not to mention the advent of a nuclear Iran. All of these together, he must hope, will leave Syria a pretty low priority on the White House's agenda. The problem is not that Bashar is not like Hafez, but that he is too much like him, and this is no longer his father's Middle East. ♦

Mugged by la Réalité

The unreported race riot in France.

BY OLIVIER GUITTA

FRÉDÉRIC ENCEL, professor of international relations at the prestigious Ecole Nationale d'Administration in Paris and a man not known for crying wolf, recently stated that France is becoming a new Lebanon. The implication, far-fetched though it may seem, was that civil upheaval might be no more than a few years off, sparked by growing ethnic and religious polarization. In recent weeks, a series of events has underlined this ominous trend.

On March 8, tens of thousands of high school students marched through central Paris to protest education reforms announced by the government. Repeatedly, peaceful demonstrators were attacked by bands of black and Arab youths—about 1,000 in all, according to police estimates. The eyewitness accounts of victims, teachers, and most interestingly the attackers themselves gathered by the left-wing daily *Le Monde* confirm the motivation: racism.

Some of the attackers openly expressed their hatred of "little French people." One 18-year-old named Heikel, a dual citizen of France and Tunisia, was proud of his actions. He explained that he had joined in just to "beat people up," especially "little Frenchmen who look like victims." He added with a satisfied smile that he had "a pleasant memory" of repeatedly kicking a student, already defenseless on the ground.

Another attacker explained the violence by saying that "little whites" don't know how to fight and "are afraid because they are cowards." Rachid, an Arab attacker, added that even an Arab can be considered a "little white" if he "has a French mindset." The general sentiment was a desire to "take revenge on whites."

Sometimes petty theft appeared to be the initial motivation. One or two bullies would approach a student and ask for money or a cell phone. Even if the victim complied right away, they would start beating him or her. A striking account was provided by Luc Colpart, a history and geography teacher and member of the far-left union SUD. Colpart said the scenes of violence were so disturbing that he could not sleep for days. He saw students being beaten or pulled by the hair. He stressed that assailants who stole cell phones smashed them in front of their victims: "It was a game. Hatred and fun."

Colpart, who is active in anti-racist causes, confirmed that "these were racial assaults," and the attackers used "far-right slurs, violent and racist." One black student he saw come to the defense of a fellow student under attack by three blacks was called "a white sellout" by the assailants. Some scores of victims were taken to hospitals. Those who were interviewed confirmed that they had been caught up in an "anti-white" rampage and that the cops did nothing to protect them.

In response to this event, a group of leading public figures, along with 1,000 high school students, issued a statement denouncing "anti-white" pogroms. Among them were the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, the journalist Jacques Julliard from the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, former

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minister of public health and founder of Doctors Without Borders Bernard Kouchner, bestselling Iranian-born author Chahdortt Djavann, the journalist Ghaleb Bencheikh, and the film director Elie Chouraqui. At a press conference announcing the release of the statement on March 25, Finkielkraut denounced Francophobia and Judeophobia.

Julliard, writing in the *Nouvel Observateur*, expressed dismay at the lack of public outcry over this display of racial hatred. He added that the left had already made the mistake of not denouncing violence in schools or soaring crime rates. And he sharply rejected the view endorsed by most left-wing organizations and individuals that the violence was an expression of class struggle, a clash between rich and poor. "Anyone should be ashamed," Julliard wrote, "after all we went through in the 20th century, to offer such a coarse explanation. . . . There is no good and bad racism."

Interestingly enough, Serge Romano, a leading representative of the black community who did not sign the public statement, readily admitted, "The young people came to beat up whites." He called the event "a catastrophe," but added, "we unfortunately expected it." One of the major anti-racist organizations, LICRA (Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme), pointed out that the same people and organizations who failed to recognize the wave of anti-Semitism in France beginning in 2000-2001 are today unwilling to face up to an outbreak of racial violence.

By coincidence, last week the French government's human rights commission delivered to Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin its 2004 report on racism and anti-Semitism in France. The report underscores a worrisome pattern of retreat into separate ethnic communities. And the evidence of hostility is sobering: The number of violent acts and threats nearly doubled, from 833 in 2003 to a record 1,565 in 2004. Of these, 62 percent were directed against Jews, who make up just 1 percent of France's population.

These figures, of course, capture only incidents sufficiently severe to come to the attention of the authorities. Beneath the radar are other incidents, seemingly petty, yet telling, such as one I happened to witness in a Paris department store a few months back. A woman was pushing her baby in a stroller down an aisle. Behind her was a well-dressed, prosperous-looking Arab woman in a hurry. Suddenly the Arab woman pushed the mother, saying, "Move, dirty Frenchwoman" ("*Dégage, sale française*"). The familiar epithet "dirty Jew" is apparently being extended for more general use.

Another remarkable verbal innovation is the use of the word "Gaulois"—an inhabitant of Gaul, the part of the Roman Empire that became France—to identify the non-Jewish, non-Muslim, non-black French. Today, the term is used mostly by Muslims and blacks, but, amazingly enough, French whites are starting to pick it up as the rift between ethnic communities grows wider. Journalist Stéphanie Marteau, in an online interview about her new book on Muslim France, for example, speaks of "the Gaulois vote."

Nowhere are the new tensions more obvious than in schools, as documented in a report on the Islamization of French schools delivered to the minister of education in late 2004 by the inspector general of national education, Jean-Pierre Obin. Not publicly released at the time, it has since been leaked and posted on the website *Proche-Orient.info*.

Obin discusses the attitudes of Muslim students, some as young as first graders. He reports, for instance, that Muslim students, asked their nationality, answer, "Muslim." When they are told that this is not a nationality and they are French, some insist that they can't be French since they are Muslim. This should come as no surprise. The presidential commission that examined the issue of secularism in 2003 reported that "extremist groups are working to test the Republic's strength and push some young people to reject France and her values."

AP / Francois Mori

The March 8 demonstration in Paris

Obin concludes his report with an appeal to the lucidity and courage of French leaders. So far, however, the Chirac administration has shown little willingness to address the new racism. It was similarly slow to recognize the largest wave of anti-Semitic vandalism to hit France since the 1930s. And Chirac personally blundered last July 14, when, in the course of his traditional Bastille Day press interview, he distinguished between "our Jewish and Muslim compatriots" and "just plain French." Jacques Chirac must know that fraternity is one of the pillars of the French Republic. If it crumbles, the whole house will collapse. ♦

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Reuters Photo Archive / The new Iraqi army

The End of the Beginning

Why Bush and Rumsfeld don't promise an early exit from Iraq. BY MICHAEL BECKLEY

SPEAKING ON FOX NEWS on March 20, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld insisted that he has no timetable for the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, reiterating what President Bush himself had said at his press conference just days before. Both men were reacting to the misguided buzz in Washington that successful Iraqi elections had paved the way for a significant drawdown of U.S. troops.

In fact, while the security situation on the ground is improving, it remains violent and chaotic. Insurgents massacre Iraqis every day, parts of the country still lack reliable supplies of electricity and water, and the process of establishing a permanent government, as heartening as it has been, could still break down into civil war. Moreover, the fledgling Iraqi security forces lack the numbers, training, and leadership to contain conflict without substantial outside assistance. In this environment, it makes no sense to believe that the elections opened the door for an early American exit. In fact, large numbers of American troops will likely be needed to secure Iraq long after Rumsfeld has left the Pentagon.

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Many in both parties hope that increasingly self-sufficient Iraqi security forces can begin to replace coalition troops substantially within the next year or two. Despite boasting that Iraqi troops now number close to 150,000, Rumsfeld wisely refrained from supporting such wishful thinking. As an analyst with the General Accounting Office recently testified, the U.S. and Iraqi governments have no idea how to measure progress toward this goal, and Pentagon statistics may overstate the number of Iraqi security forces by "tens of thousands." In the past, the rush to fill Iraqi ranks came at the expense of proper training and equipment. But even if all these problems were magically remedied, there is another reason Rumsfeld cannot promise an early exit: a scarcity of Iraqi officers.

No matter how many Iraqi troops are trained in the coming months, Iraqi units will only be as good as the officers leading them. As Army Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, the commander of multinational forces around Mosul, recently put it, "When they [Iraqi forces] have strong leadership, they do just fine. When they have weak leadership, as we saw in the police force here in Mosul, they don't do well."

Any withdrawal of coalition forces, therefore, will depend on the establishment of a viable Iraqi chain of command, built from scratch. As Phebe Marr has pointed out, Saddam's army ran on loyalty, not military skill. Officers who did not show loyalty were passed over for promotion or purged. This loyalty-based system produced ineffective leaders who equated rank with privilege rather than responsibility. According to many American advisers in Iraq today, Iraqi commanders often avoid going out with their troops, expect substantial leave, and even steal funds from their units. As one U.S. major put it: "The majority of the officers of the old army are ineffective at best and a true cancer at worst."

Since simply readmitting former officers will not fill the leadership void, much of the future officer corps will need to come from today's inexperienced recruits. Training a typical soldier takes months; training a leader takes years. The current Pentagon strategy embeds U.S. advisers within Iraqi units to provide experience in the field, but preparing officers also requires proper facilities, academies, and time to develop skills and earn respect from lower-ranking soldiers.

NATO countries recently pledged to bolster their small training mission, but Washington should not anticipate much more from its allies. NATO countries have long promised to train Iraqis, but of the 144 training positions the alliance agreed to fill with non-Americans, 50 remain empty. In the Balkans and Afghanistan (missions many NATO countries actually supported) Europeans still ended up delivering only about 30 percent of the security forces they pledged. Worse, many coalition countries are pulling their troops out of Iraq, placing more responsibility for security on the United States.

Even under the best-case scenario, American forces will be needed to keep the lid on conflict for many years. That may startle those who want to believe that the successful elections in Iraq spell the end of America's commitment. But history

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suggests a long-term troop presence is predictable and sustainable. American soldiers remain deployed in large numbers in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, and even Germany and Japan. Iraq will be no exception.

Advocates of near-term withdrawal may be right when they say this war is "unwinnable" in the sense that we cannot eradicate the insurgency. A more achievable goal is to keep the insurgency at bay, creating time and space for political progress. But until Iraqi security forces can operate independently, a full American commitment unconstrained by arbitrary timetables for withdrawal will be vital to a peaceful and democratic Iraq. ♦

Free the Riyadh Three!

All they want is a constitutional monarchy.

BY ALI H. ALYAMI

The prisoners

Courtesy Ali H. Alyami

JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, 13 prominent Saudi reformers were rounded up in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam and thrown into prison. They had signed a petition asking for a constitutional monarchy to replace the absolute monarchy now reigning in Saudi Arabia. As is common in the kingdom, no charges were formally brought against the men, but the reason given for the arrests was that the reformers were destabilizing the country by "introducing Western terminology in asking for change."

According to their lawyer, "The reformers were calling for a written constitution to protect people's rights and decrease the unlimited powers of political institutions." The reformers argued that the Koran and sharia (Islamic law) are not inconsistent with democratic practices. Their call for power-sharing, however, was considered an affront to what the Saud family sees as its ownership by divine right of the nation it named after itself in 1932.

The reformers were given a choice: They could sign affidavits agreeing not to petition or speak publicly about democratic reform or travel outside the country, or they could remain in prison. After some time, 10 of the 13 signed the affidavits and were released. The remaining three—Matruk Alfaleh, a professor of political science at King Saud University, Abdullah Al-Hamed, professor of literature at Imam Mohammed University, and poet Ali Al-Doumaini—are in prison to this day.

These three also refused to be tried in closed court. They demanded a public trial, and a public hearing was scheduled for August 23, 2004. When the day came, however, and about 300 family members and supporters poured into the courthouse, the judge deemed it necessary to postpone the hearing indefinitely. Just recently, on March 15, the reformers were brought back to court, but they refused to answer questions unless the proceedings were open and the media and their lawyers were present. An argument broke out, and the judge delayed the hearing. Given the record of Saudi Arabia's religious judicial system, no one is expecting an open and fair trial.

Ironically, the initial arrests were made when then-Secretary of State Colin Powell was visiting Saudi Arabia and around the time King Fahd decreed the opening of the government's "National Commission for Human Rights." Secretary Powell's only response was that the United States does not like it when people get arrested for expressing their opinions. This is typical of the administration's mixed messages to democratic reformers. While President Bush's calls for reform resonate all over the Arab world and are changing the political landscape, concrete opportunities to show clear support for courageous Saudi activists are allowed to slip away.

Surely it is time for the Bush administration and the U.S. Congress to stop regarding the Saudi royal family as sacrosanct and start holding them accountable for their violations of human rights. Defeating terrorism and eradicating religious extremism and intolerance require a genuine overhaul of Saudi political, social, religious, and economic institutions. If democratizing Saudi Arabia is left to the House of Saud, we can expect only window dressing in place of reform, while religious extremism is allowed to flourish, and the export of a dangerous ideology continues apace. ♦

Ali H. Alyami is director of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (www.cdhr.info).

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Nation Building, After All

With the U.S. military in Afghanistan

BY VANCE SERCHUK & TOM DONNELLY

Ghazni, Afghanistan

The line of Army Humvees stood motionless, engines running, waiting for the order to roll forward. Behind the convoy, concrete barriers and loops of concertina wire marked the edge of a U.S. firebase—a collection of plywood shacks, canvas tents, and shipping containers clustered around a long rectangular building that was once a Taliban madrassa. Ahead, a faint path of crushed snow snaked its way to the asphalt of the ring road—90 miles to Kabul on the right, 215 miles to Kandahar on the left, and a vast expanse of ice in every other direction.

Welcome to Ghazni, Afghanistan's eighth largest city, where nighttime temperatures fall to thirty below zero. In the 11th and 12th centuries, this was the seat of the Ghaznavid Empire, a major cultural center of the Islamic world and, according to the 1977 *Historical Guide to Afghanistan*, a city more recently "famed for the embroidered sheepskin coats currently enjoying great popularity throughout Europe and the United States." Alas for the contemporary tourist, all that remains today of Ghaznavid glory are a pair of hulking minarets on the outskirts of town, surrounded by the rusting carcasses of Soviet tanks. The embroidered coats are also nowhere to be found—alas for aging hippies.

Spend a few days in Ghazni and it's easy to understand why Afghanistan isn't a place that lends itself to nuance. In the three and a half years since the overthrow of the Taliban, predictions about the country's trajectory—much like its weather—have tended to favor extremes. For Seymour Hersh, Richard Clarke, Michael Scheuer, and countless other critics, warlords are ruling the countryside, the Taliban is inching its way back to power, Hamid Karzai is the mayor of Kabul, and on the economic front poppy is and forever shall be king. Conversely, for too many of the Bush administration's supporters, Afghanistan has been treated as little more than a mark on a checklist, validating theories about the future American way of war and the universal appeal of democracy.

While there are kernels of truth in each of these assessments, none begins to capture the sheer complexity of either the security situation in the country or the U.S.-led efforts to build a more decent political order there. The trend lines are, for the moment, more encouraging than not. It's especially tough to be a pessimist in Kabul, a city where for every problem you can imagine, there are four Microsoft PowerPoint presentations competing to solve it. And even beyond the prefab conference rooms of the American military, the messy, sprawling Afghan capital is full of hopeful surprises.

Kabul's broad avenues are choked with traffic, as Afghans ride bumper-to-bumper alongside the white Land Cruisers beloved by the international community. There are supermarkets, Internet cafés, bookstores, and a surprisingly diverse tableau of restaurants; signs of commerce are everywhere, from posters advertising English language classes to the man with an antique, wooden camera offering photographic services just down the street from the national passport office. More children are at school than ever before. It's even possible to find local Afghan wine—the ultimate repudiation of Taliban orthodoxy—although the drink, it must be emphasized, is the color of dirty milk, stored in used soda bottles, and advisable only in the direst of circumstances.

To be sure, there are still plenty of problems in the security sector that need to be addressed, and countless reforms could become unstuck. Some of these challenges are squarely in the hands of the United States, but responsibility for most of them lies somewhere between the Americans, the Afghans, and the rest of the international coalition that is holding the country together. It's also use-

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ful to keep the image of Ghazni's frozen moonscape in the back of one's mind, if only to remember that most of Afghanistan isn't Kabul—and that there are constraints that come with working at the far side of the world.

Yet despite all the obstacles, the United States appears to be making significant progress in Afghanistan—three words that not so long ago would have been dismissed as an oxymoron. So exactly what went right? And can it hold?

The village of Daykhudadad sits unprepossessingly on the northern rim of the high, narrow Kabul valley, overlooking the Afghan capital. On the drive there from the center of the city, the rutted asphalt and pockmarked concrete of Kabul's more affluent districts quickly give way to mud—mud houses, mud walls, mud streets. Although it was January, the sun was out, melting the snow deposited by a storm a few days earlier and greasing the road; with nightfall, the temperature would plunge and the city would ice over, one of the few predictable routines in the country.

Like many of Kabul's poorer outlying areas, Daykhudadad is populated predominantly by refugees, Afghans who fled the country during its civil war and came back after Hamid Karzai was installed as provisional leader in late 2001. Three and a half million such people have returned from Pakistan and Iran since the fall of the Taliban in what amounts to a straw poll of ordinary Afghans' confidence in the future of their country—and everyone's got an opinion about its progress.

"First of all, there's no electricity, no light," one shopkeeper says, an ethnic Hazara originally from Bamiyan, cradling a glass of steaming tea in his hands as we talk. "The street is not good. Also, there's no hospital."

How about the police? "They are thieves."

Have coalition soldiers ever stopped here? Have they done anything to help? "They don't talk to locals. They just look to see if it's secure or not, and then they leave," the man explains, shrugging.

Such was a typical exchange in Daykhudadad, whose impoverished inhabitants are quick to reel off the improvements they would like to see from their government. But as striking as the litany of problems at the start of each of these conversations was what invariably came at their conclusion: praise for President Karzai, the U.S.-led military coalition, and the overall state of the nation. "The main thing is the country is at peace," insists the shopkeeper, again and again.

Daykhudadad illustrates a simple but crucial point in understanding Afghanistan's progress over the past three and a half years. For most of the world, and especially Americans, the September 11 attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan marked the beginning of a war. But for most Afghans, the arrival of the U.S. military in late 2001 signified the end of one. Traveling across the country today, one sees a landscape crisscrossed with scars—rocks painted red to indicate mines, houses flattened by rocket fire, scraps of decaying Soviet weaponry—the relics of a Cold War battlefield where the fighting continued long after Washington and Moscow gave up and went home.

Indeed, while Americans generally acknowledge that our abandonment of Afghanistan following the Soviet collapse was a strategic mistake, providing a safe haven in which al Qaeda was able to plot mass murder, what is less appreciated is the degree to which disengagement was also a humanitarian catastrophe, on par with some of the worst bloodshed of the post-Cold War period. During the 1990s, Afghanistan was physically and psychologically mauled, not just by the Islamist authoritarianism of the Taliban in the territory under its control, but by conventional warfare between factions battling each other. In their summer offensive of 1999, for instance, more than 6,000 Taliban soldiers launched a three-pronged assault with tanks, aerial bombardment, and heavy artillery into the Shomali valley, north of Kabul. Entire towns were emptied, goats and cows were machine-gunned, and crops burned. By 2001, every major road in the country had been torn apart by tank treads.

Operation Enduring Freedom put a stop to this brutal and unremitting civil war. Afghans in Daykhudadad may complain that they lack amenities, but they haven't forgotten the large-scale violence that drove them from their country; simply preventing its resurgence has bought the U.S.-led coalition and the Karzai government an enormous store of good will.

In a strange and unforeseen way, Afghanistan's mind-boggling backwardness has also played to America's strategic advantage. Unlike Iraq, which enjoyed a level of prosperity during the 1970s roughly equivalent to that of some poorer countries in Europe, Afghanistan has always been rural, destitute, and lacking in infrastructure. As one American soldier poetically put it, "Most people here are lucky to have a pot to piss in."

Afghans are unquestionably eager for more schools, new hospitals, and better roads, but most are also accustomed to not having them. Even relatively small projects—building a village well, providing veterinary care to livestock—can consequently have a disproportionate impact in winning hearts and minds. "In Afghanistan, people have no expectations of the government," explains Colonel Cardon Crawford, the operations chief at Com-

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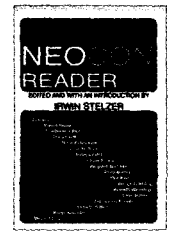
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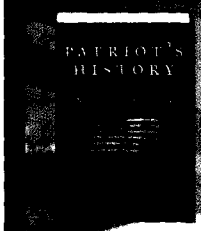
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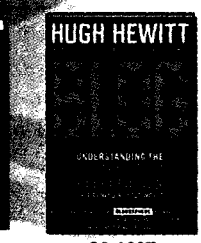
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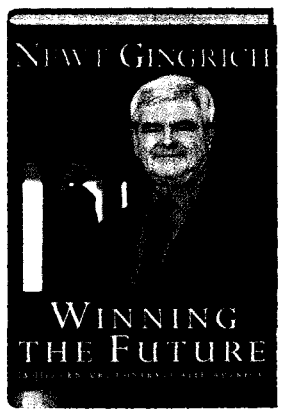
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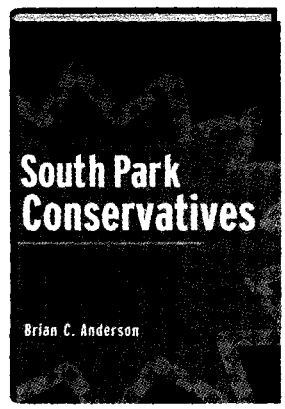
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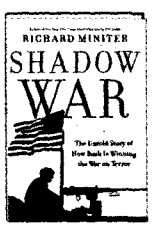
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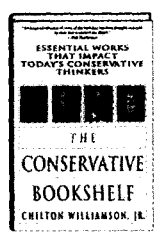
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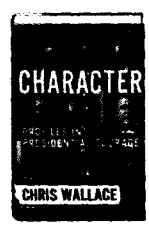
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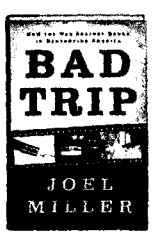
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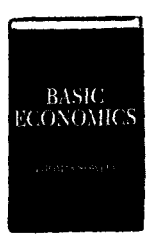
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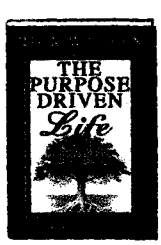
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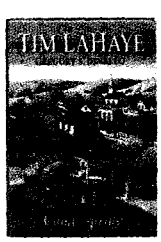
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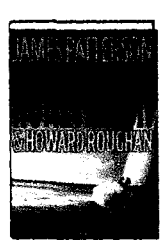
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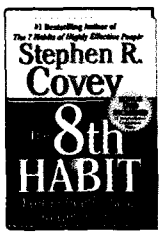

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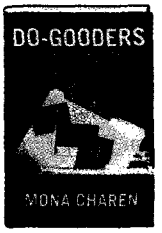

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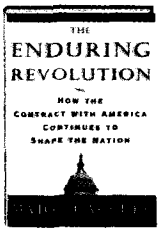

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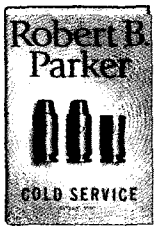

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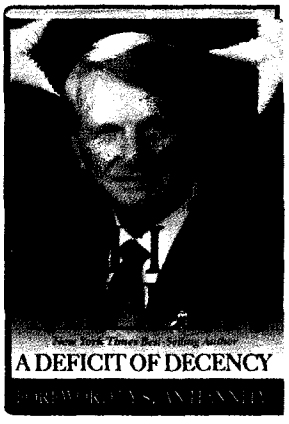

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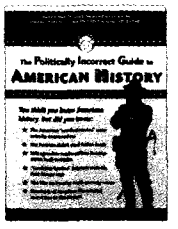

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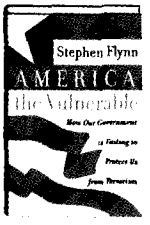

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bined Forces Command Afghanistan. "If the government can show anything positive, it has a *huge* strategic effect."

Perhaps the most important consequence of Afghanistan's 20-plus-year experience with internecine conflict, however, is simply the country's exhaustion. War is a grinding, tiring business, as Europeans used to discover periodically during their own continental bloodlettings. For all the stereotypes about Afghans' indomitable warrior spirit, jihad doesn't have quite the ring it once did, and plenty of former combatants are more than willing to beat swords into ploughshares, especially if there's a monetary incentive to do so.

For American troops in Afghanistan, this means that as much if not more of their time is spent collecting and disposing of weapons as actually using them. Thus, one recent bitterly cold winter day found soldiers from the 116th Infantry Division of the Virginia National Guard on a three-hour drive to pick up an arms cache from a village in Wardak province. A towering heap of rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank mines, and other deadly ordnance was loaded onto an Army truck for transport back to the American firebase—a seemingly insignificant fraction of the hundreds of millions of weapons scattered throughout the country, but enough to kill every person in our convoy several times over. The villagers had decided they were no longer especially keen on having them lying around their homes.

Before heading back, the soldiers paid a courtesy call at the headquarters of the provincial chief of the NSD, Afghanistan's internal security service. After a few minutes of pleasantries over platters of pistachios and almonds, the official's son—no more than 7 or 8 years old—peered into his office to get a better look at his father's strange, armor-clad visitors. "You must be very proud of your son," one of the soldiers volunteered. "Perhaps he'll grow up to be NSD chief, too."

"I hope not," the spymaster of Wardak province quietly replied. "Better if he becomes a doctor."

Afghanistan's postwar exhaustion was a crucial but by no means sufficient prerequisite for the improvements in the security situation there. Unsurprisingly, it took time for the U.S. military and the new government in Kabul to find their footing in the country they were ostensibly running. As in Iraq, the Bush administration initially made more than its share of blunders, and a year and a half after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan was arguably headed in the wrong direction.

The administration began to overhaul its Afghan strategy in the second half of 2002 and first half of 2003, coincident—ironically enough—with the planning and execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (The U.S. government, it turns out, occasionally can walk and chew gum at the same time.) The most important contribution of this policy review—which included individuals both inside and outside of government—was the realization that America's national security objectives in Afghanistan were ultimately inseparable from the emergence of a decent political order there. Thus the Pentagon quietly expanded its mandate from strict counterterrorism to a broad-based strategy of counterinsurgency.

The new plan of attack identified not just one, but three interconnected wars to be waged in Afghanistan: a war against senior terrorist leaders; a war against networks of predominantly Pashtun, Islamist insurgent groups like the Taliban and Hizbi Islami; and a war against other centrifugal forces, such as warlords, that sap the strength and legitimacy of the central government in Kabul. Rather than envisioning the conflict in terms of rapid, decisive operations geared at destroying the enemy, the U.S. military instead began to adopt a mindset that emphasized the Afghan people and Afghan government institutions as the critical centers of gravity in what was likely to be a long, drawn-out struggle.

While previously the bulk of American troops had been concentrated around the U.S. garrison at Bagram and dispatched forward only on specific "boom-and-zoom" strike missions, they were now redeployed in smaller formations at firebases throughout the country. Consistent with classic counterinsurgency doctrine, this new force posture allowed the military to stay close to the local population, yielding better intelligence and shaping the political battlefield. The coalition also began an innovative program of aggressively expanding the number of Provisional Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs. These small groups of civil-affairs officers are based at sites around the country, where they work directly with Afghans on a range of development projects—everything from renovating schools to running free health clinics to handing out blankets in the winter. Whereas 4 PRTs were in place in June 2003, today there are 19, with plans to eventually establish one in each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces.

The number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan also began to creep upward during this period, from 8,000 in April 2003, to 11,500 in December 2003, to 13,000 in March 2004, to between 17,000 and 18,000 today. It bears emphasizing that this was not simply a matter of throwing more bodies at Afghanistan's myriad security problems; rather, force size and force posture alike were realigned as part of an overarching shift in American strategy.

The fact that the Pentagon managed to more than double its footprint in Afghanistan at the same time the U.S. military has been engaged in another, much larger coun-

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terinsurgency campaign in Iraq should give pause to those who argue the Bush administration abandoned one conflict for the other. At the same time, it's undeniable that Iraq did impose significant limitations on the manpower available for Afghanistan.

Interestingly, however, the unavailability of U.S. troops—coupled with the failure of Western allies to contribute any more than a few thousand of their own—prodded the Pentagon to do what it otherwise might not have done: get serious about building the Afghan National Army. Historically, at least, the American military has not treated the indigenous forces it has raised particularly well, except when they have been the only available troops on the field. The latter was the case in El Salvador during the 1980s and in the Philippines a century ago—two counterinsurgencies the United States won. It is also true in Afghanistan today.

Indeed, there is no better symbol of America's progress in Afghanistan to date than the Afghan National Army, or ANA. As of February 2005, the ANA had approximately 21,000 troops out of the planned 46,000-strong ground force—a threefold increase over the past year. In a country where shelter and food remain elusive for a vast share of the population, being an Afghan soldier is a pretty good gig. Troops live indoors, enjoy the benefits of electricity and plumbing, and receive warm clothes and regular meals. The pay is also extremely attractive by Afghan standards—$100 to $110 a month, on average, as of late 2004.

Reuters Photo Archive

Sgt. Ryan Garfield with an Afghan child rescued from floodwaters, March 19

Responsibility for building the Afghan defense sector falls to Coalition Task Force Phoenix, made up predominantly of U.S. Army National Guardsmen. Visiting the string of facilities along the Kabul-Jalalabad road that form the nucleus of the ANA project, one is immediately struck by the effort the Guardsmen are making to show respect for Afghan norms and traditions. Instructors assigned to Phoenix wear badges that spell out their last names in Dari, the language used for most official business in Afghanistan. They greet ANA counterparts by exchanging kisses on the cheek, and make small talk about the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. Because Afghanistan has little in the way of a banking system, its soldiers have a tendency to disappear after receiving monthly salaries to take money home to their families—a practice their American trainers have largely given up trying to curb. "Sometimes you have to step back and say, okay, that's the Afghan way," says Maj. Eric Bloom, a spokesman for Task Force Phoenix.

The Task Force has been less forgiving on other points, however. Despite initial resistance from the Ministry of Defense, the U.S. military has insisted that the proportion of each Afghan ethnic group recruited to the ANA should reflect its overall share of the population, plus or minus a few percentage points. This affirmative action policy has ended the Panjshiri Tajik domination of the defense sector that characterized the initial post-Taliban period and created one of the few genuinely multiethnic institutions in the country. It also marks an important victory for the Karzai government, which has been eager to stress a nonsectarian national identity. In addition to stamping out ethnic tensions, Task Force Phoenix has striven to eliminate doctrinal prejudices in Afghan military culture, such as the weakness of the noncommissioned officers corps and the terrible treatment of conscripts, inherited from the Soviet Union.

New Afghan recruits go through basic training at the Kabul Military Training Center as "kandaks," battalion-

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sized units of approximately 800 men, but—critically—American efforts do not end there. When kandaks are deployed downrange to fight, U.S. military trainers go with them, reinforcing the lessons they have learned and keeping a careful check on their discipline and professionalism. These American officers are embedded with the Afghan National Army from the company to the corps level, mentoring generals and rallying grunts. They also provide an invaluable link between Afghan units and U.S. troops in the field, facilitating their interoperability, pushing opportunities for cooperation, and building trust on both sides. "Why do we work well with ANA? Because they're Army," explains one American infantryman in Ghazni. "We speak the same language."

All of this is a capital-intensive investment, to be sure. "Everything we take for granted in the U.S. Army has to be created here," says Brigadier General Richard Moorhead, commander of Task Force Phoenix. At the same time, however, the cost of feeding, clothing, housing, training, and arming an Afghan soldier is markedly less than that of his American equivalent, and in theory, an Afghan corps—with 350 American trainers—can replace a 4,000-man U.S. brigade, generating enormous savings in manpower.

It's projected that Afghanistan's army will reach target strength by December 2006, at which point its basic training programs will begin to be scaled back. Professional military education will continue to expand, however, with the establishment this year of a national military academy in Kabul modeled after West Point. In addition, U.S. military planners are looking well past 2006 in developing the "sustaining institutions" of the ANA, so that it can manage its own acquisitions, logistics, recruiting, and communications. In marked contrast to Iraq, where there has been intense political pressure from Washington to stand up indigenous forces as quickly as possible, the emphasis in Afghanistan has been on the sustainability and quality of the army for the long haul ahead.

Counterinsurgencies typically reward such patience, and there are hopeful signs that the U.S. approach in Afghanistan is producing dividends. "What is happening here will be studied as classic counterinsurgency leading to nation-building," says Colonel James Stopford, the British officer who serves as the strategy and planning chief for Combined Forces Command Afghanistan.

Attacks on coalition forces, for example, are down from an average of 10 to 15 a week last year to fewer than 5 today. There are indications that the Taliban is splintering internally, with former combatants eager to come in from the cold as part of a series of national reconciliation programs. Likewise, the failure of insurgents to disrupt the October 2004 presidential election was a major psychological blow to them. They proved unable to carry off successful attacks during the voter registration process, the balloting, or the inauguration. "Three strikes and you're out, even in Afghanistan," says Colonel David Lamm, chief of staff to Lieutenant General David Barno, the top U.S. general in the country.

Indeed, democracy itself is proving to be an incredibly powerful weapon in Afghanistan's counterinsurgency campaign. In addition to conferring greater legitimacy on the Karzai government, Afghanistan's emerging political order is co-opting a broad range of actors and creating the basis for stability in the country.

Nowhere is the evidence of this more apparent than in Afghanistan's "disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration" process. As its name suggests, DDR seeks to break the power relationship between Afghanistan's warlords and their foot soldiers. It is specifically aimed at the "Afghan Military Forces"—a collective term for the anti-Taliban militias voluntarily if nominally placed under the authority of the country's new Ministry of Defense in December 2001. Run by the United Nations and funded largely by Japan, DDR has officially disarmed more than 44,000 of the estimated 45,000 Afghan Military Forces.

Much of the progress has come in just the past few months, as militia leaders like the notorious General Abdurrashid Dostum have rushed to clean themselves up to qualify for this year's coming parliamentary elections. "The Panjshir Valley is demobilizing in the middle of winter. Why? They are running like mad so they can participate in a democratic political process," says Colonel Lamm. (In order to lead a political party, the Afghan constitution requires that a candidate not have "military or quasi-military aims and organizations.")

In addition, President Karzai's dismissal of Defense Minister Marshal Muhammad Quasim Fahim, a Northern Alliance commander who had resisted disarmament and demobilization, and his replacement with General Abdur Rahim Wardak, a strong supporter of the program, has sent an unmistakable signal about the central government's growing authority and confidence. The Kabul rumor mill has it that Fahim has been telling friends that his failure to participate in demobilization was a big mistake. To some extent, whether the story is true is less important than the very fact it's circulating. "These guys are very clever. They want to be on the winning side," says one official involved in overseeing DDR.

Still, a number of questions associated with the process remain. First, it's worth noting that determining the precise number of militia fighters is more art than science, since these are not regular soldiers, but forces that are rounded up ad hoc by their commanders. While it was initially estimated that there were more than 260,000

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Afghans eligible for DDR, it was later realized that the warlords were vastly inflating their figures, in the hope of boosting their prestige and receiving salaries for soldiers who did not exist.

There are also doubts about how effective the reintegration component of DDR actually has been. "If Dostum feels threatened and he snaps his fingers, how many men will rally to his call?" asks one coalition official. "Is it tribal loyalty, or will he have to pay money? Has that power structure *really* been broken? DDR simply hasn't accomplished that—not across the board."

Skeptics cite a dearth of small arms being handed in and argue that participation in the program reflects a tactical decision on the part of the warlords to surrender stocks of heavy weapons and instead maintain lighter forces, but that there is no deep, strategic commitment to a new political order in the country. "There are a lot of people who live in Kabul, in this glass house, and they believe the figures on the little pieces of paper," warns another official of DDR.

Certainly, there remain plenty of reasons not to be sanguine about the security situation in Afghanistan. Even accepting the most optimistic appraisals of DDR, for example, the program doesn't begin to take into account the problem of "informal" militias. In contrast to the Afghan Military Forces, whose leaders voluntarily placed themselves under Karzai's Ministry of Defense, the coalition is just now coming to grips with the armed groups that have intentionally avoided appearing on anyone's radar screen. And as one might expect in a place like Afghanistan, these come in every imaginable shape, size, color, and flavor.

First there are the private security corporations that provide protection to Kabul's alphabet city of international organizations, embassies, foreign commercial firms, and nongovernmental entities. Many of these companies are highly professional, disciplined, and effective outfits, employing retired Western military officers who take their work very seriously; others, unfortunately, are a motlier bunch, mercenaries who are not above provoking incidents in order to drive up their own marketability. "They scare the crap out of the NGOs," sighs a coalition official. "They need to be controlled."

Corralling and registering the security firms, however, is relatively straightforward compared with the headaches caused by the illegal militias that populate the countryside. Some are simply local groups organized for civil defense—neighborhood watches with AK-47s—but many others are engaged in criminal activities, smuggling drugs, antiquities, and people across Afghanistan's porous borders. Many also carry political loyalties, filling a vast gray area between the Karzai government and the declared insurgent groups.

As of November 2004, there was virtually no sense of how many of these groups existed. Today, it is believed there are at least 850 unofficial militias in Afghanistan, with some 65,000 members. A plan is being spun out of the DDR process that would provide incentives for their disbanding, but it's deeply unclear how much this will actually achieve or how hard the U.S. military and the Karzai government are willing to push the issue.

Then there's the drug problem—and what a problem it is. Afghanistan produces 87 percent of the opium in the world; processing and trafficking in heroin is believed to be growing, estimated at $2.2 billion in 2004, up from $1.3 billion the year before. In a recent raid in Nangarhar province, 17 tons of heroin were seized—enough for every person in the United States.

"It's an opium economy," says one official involved in the counternarcotics effort. "It's the growing. It's the processing. It's the trafficking. It's everything."

For now, the drug problem in Afghanistan is extremely wide but not particularly deep. Unlike in Colombia, international cartels have not yet established a foothold inside the country, poisoning its politics, but everyone agrees that this won't be the case for long. "Right now, the Afghan drug business is controlled and run by Afghans," explains Doug Wankel, a former DEA official who is the counternarcotics point man at the U.S. embassy. The networks haven't extended into London or New York yet, but unless they are rolled up quickly, they will.

A five-year counternarcotics strategy is being developed jointly by the U.S. embassy, the British embassy, and the foreign military forces in the country, with the stated goals of marginalizing the drug trade, reducing the drug economy, and increasing Afghan counternarcotic capabilities by late 2009. President Karzai, for his part, has declared a jihad on drugs, appealing to his countrymen's national dignity and religious morality to prevent the emergence of a narco-state. There's also a big push on the part of the U.S. government to land the arrest of a major trafficker in the next few months.

There are already a few signs of hope. Poppy cultivation this year appears to be down—perhaps as much as 40 percent—and the Karzai government is a committed partner on this issue. Indeed, some officials, like Deputy Interior Minister Mohammad Daoud Khan, are close to being over-committed; Khan famously has announced a 100-percent eradication policy. In private conversation, he's more realistic, aware of how delicate the issue is politically: "I'd settle for 70 percent," he says.

Finally, the U.S. military is deeply troubled by the

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state of the Afghan police and judiciary, both of which, unlike the Afghan National Army, remain stagnant, corrupt, and unreliable. Reforming these institutions has been the declared responsibility of the German and Italian governments, respectively, but no one in Kabul has nice things to say about their management to date. Consequently, it is increasingly likely that the United States will assume a greater leadership role in both areas in the coming year.

Even more important than the specific facts and figures associated with each of these security problems, however, is the extent to which they are interlocking—and the implications this has for U.S. policy. In some cases, the solutions are mutually supportive. Consider, for example, the relationship between stamping out drugs and building an effective police force and judiciary. "If you arrest someone, you need to have a courthouse and a jail," says Colonel Lamm. "Whoops! You don't have them."

Matters are more problematic when the components of the Afghan security sector are not immediately complementary, pitting different parts of the established organizational charts against each other. The challenge then becomes for the coalition to get its priorities and the various parts of its internal bureaucracy synchronized—and that's a lot easier said than done. It's unclear at this point how effectively the command arrangement in the country, which has evolved into a complex and decentralized structure, will be able to cut through this Gordian knot of interwoven issues.

Take the case of Asadullah Khalid, the dapper young governor of Ghazni province. It's an open secret that Asadullah has his own private militia, likely numbering 800 to 1,200 men, which the governor has tried to hide, albeit not very effectively, by disguising them as highway police. But Asadullah is also regarded as a competent administrator, deeply devoted to humanitarian reconstruction projects in his province. To boot, U.S. military officers in Ghazni say he uses his militia to fight the Taliban. What to do?

The answer, needless to say, depends heavily on where you sit and what portfolio you carry. No U.S. military officer in Ghazni expressed any enthusiasm for doing anything to disrupt their relationship with the governor, given Asadullah's usefulness in fighting bad guys and helping rebuild the country. In Kabul, on the other hand, several officials indicated that their patience with the situation in Ghazni was fast running out, and that—barring certain behavioral changes on the governor's part—he might soon be ditched.

Similarly, even where priorities are ostensibly complementary, their respective timelines may not be. For instance, although the counternarcotics effort would benefit immeasurably from police reform, the former simply can't wait for the latter to happen. Consequently, Afghanistan's counternarcotics strategy is expected to rely more heavily on people than institutions—even if that means the institution-building project itself is impeded in the process.

Another source of tension—inevitable in any counterinsurgency campaign—is the proper balance between humanitarian reconstruction and strategic pacification. In Kabul, more than one official expressed frustration that the Provisional Reconstruction Teams were reluctant to dirty their hands on issues like disbanding illegal militias and fighting the drug trade. A recent policy paper on counternarcotics from the U.S. embassy, for instance, called for the involvement and inclusion of PRTs in developing alternative livelihoods for poppy growers and eradicating their crops.

"PRTs are not involved in counternarcotics—period," counters Colonel Randy Brooks, the Canadian reservist responsible for overseeing the Provisional Reconstruction Teams in Kabul. "Folks have been very emphatic that PRTs, in order to maintain the support of the Afghan people, cannot be seen to be involved in eradication," he explains, speaking with the careful diction and soft-spoken authority of a school teacher, which he happens to be in his civilian life.

On the ground, in Ghazni, by contrast, the tension flows in the opposite direction, with many members of the combat arms battalion arguing that the PRT should stick to reconstruction and leave pacification to them. Both the Ghazni PRT and the combat arms battalion, for example, consider the reform of the local police to be their responsibility—and both have been providing supplies and training to local cops. (In fact, neither of them has a mandate to do this, technically speaking, but Ghazni is a long way from Kabul.)

"Strategy is five years, and it's what we're doing here," insists Colonel Lamm, chief of staff to General Barno. Indeed, a commitment to a prolonged U.S. presence is one of the few constants across the Afghan security sector—and the final cause for optimism about the future here.

In Ghazni, projects are being planned through the end of the decade, many rotations after the current group of soldiers there has moved on. At Camp Phoenix, officers describe a timeline for the Afghan National Army that runs through 2013.

No doubt many of these plans will be overtaken by events or radically altered to reflect unexpected develop-

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ments. But the fact remains, the U.S. military expects to be here for the foreseeable future, and it is planning accordingly. At least in Kabul, the myth of disengagement is dead, and that in itself is no small accomplishment. The security situation in Afghanistan is going to require a long-term presence; indeed, it is the only way for the tensions and contradictions within the U.S. mission to be resolved.

A tougher question is whether other members of the international coalition have similar staying power. NATO's peacekeepers, who are responsible for the less problematic northern parts of country, might last as much as a decade. But is the Atlantic Alliance really willing and able to build a strategic partnership with Kabul beyond that, as it has with the Eastern European states of the former Soviet Union? Will Brussels accede to a long-term involvement in the Hindu Kush?

At the very least, many in Kabul are skeptical, arguing that the multilateral coalition that is currently helping to secure the country is likely to fade in the coming years. In its place, a bilateral alliance with the United States will become the cornerstone of Afghan national security policy, much like those the United States maintains with Japan, Australia, and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Air Force / UPI / Landov / Catie Hague

The snows of Afghanistan: transporting humanitarian aid at Bagram airfield

Afghanistan certainly has plenty to offer Washington, beginning with its location. "Strategically, this is a great foothold for us," says Colonel Crawford, the U.S. military operations chief in Kabul. At the crossroads of Central, South, and East Asia, as well as the Middle East, Afghanistan shares borders with Iran, Pakistan, and China—three states that pose significant access problems for the U.S. military. At the very least, having stable U.S. basing arrangements in Afghanistan would help to keep pressure on our strategic competitors in the region.

Inversely, the Afghans themselves would benefit from a U.S. security guarantee, making their less-than-democratic neighbors think twice before interfering in their internal affairs. And even as the country begins to develop the semblance of a functional economy in the years ahead, the government in Kabul should be devoting resources to raising its people out of poverty, developing infrastructure, and improving education, rather than having to commit massive outlays to provide for its defense. As far as beachheads of freedom go, we could do a lot worse.

It's easy, of course, for Americans to project their hopes and fears onto Afghanistan's landscape. What's harder for us to manage, much less predict, are Afghans' own perceptions and expectations of what lies ahead.

Most of the surprises in this regard have thus far been happy ones. A people who have known nothing but war have proven eager for peace; the country that gave rise to the Taliban has proven hungry for democracy. Even back in Ghazni, the expansive ice, so bleak and depressing to American eyes, emblematic of all the limitations on Afghanistan's progress, turns out to be a symbol of hope for the locals.

In addition to suffering more than 20 years of war, Afghanistan has endured almost a decade of drought. The blanket of snow that has settled over the country promises water after the thaw. For many superstitious Afghans, it's no coincidence that the coming of democracy coincides with the end of the drought; it's proof, despite winter's bitter hardships, of a better future. For now, Afghanistan is a country patiently waiting for spring. ♦

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God's Democrat

The church of Jim Wallis

By Katherine Mangu-Ward

It takes a certain amount of chutzpah to write a book called *God's Politics*. But you have only to read a few pages of Jim Wallis's new bestseller by that name to discover that it isn't actually about the politics of an all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful deity at all. Instead, it's 384 pages of *Jim's* politics, and Jim (with a couple of notable exceptions) is a pretty average, down-the-line leftist who, by the way, believes in God.

Wallis is a hot property lately on the talk-show, book-tour circuit and, more important, in Democratic party backrooms. Still smarting from their rebuff by "values voters" last November, Democrats are paying close attention to what he has to say. As Wallis notes, there's "nothing like failure to make you reassess." Some are wondering whether Wallis—who calls himself a "progressive evangelical"—could be the impresario of a religious left, a liberal Jerry Falwell.

Wallis, for his part, is eager to dispel the notion. "The Weekly Standard will do well if it doesn't paint the progressive evangelical movement as all the liberals who are religious," he stresses in an interview. Instead, Wallis presents himself as above the fray, a nonpartisan agitator following the truths of the Bible wherever they lead. "Religion doesn't fit neatly in the categories 'left' and 'right,'" he notes. "It should challenge left and right." He portrays himself as a man who can walk among the denizens of both parties and face down both.

What's wrong with this picture is that it squares poorly with the evidence of either Wallis's present or his past. Take the political program advocated in *God's Politics*. A liberal Democrat will find almost nothing here to challenge him, unless he balks at praise for "healthy, two-parent families"; a conservative Republican almost nothing to agree with. The obvious exception is abortion. Wallis is pro-life and forthrightly deplores the Democratic party's "highly ideological and very rigid stance on this critical moral issue." But his chapter "A Consistent Ethic of Life" offers a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down for committed pro-choice Democrats, pairing the case against abortion with the case against capital punishment. Pro-choicers will have no trouble shrugging off this breach in an otherwise nearly flawless leftist litany on poverty, war, the environment, domestic spending, racism, the Middle East, the evils of advertising, and the awarding of sinister contracts to Halliburton.

Asked to name a prominent Republican ally, Wallis mentions only Mark Hatfield, who retired from the Senate in 1997. Current Democratic senators, meanwhile, are fervent in their praise. Byron Dorgan calls Wallis a "breath of fresh air." Both Minority Leader Harry Reid and liberal patriarch Edward Kennedy credit Wallis with helping them figure out how to talk about values, aides told the *Los Angeles Times*. Reid has even borrowed from Wallis's editorials in the magazine he edits, *Sojourners*, for floor speeches, vowing to "turn this budget into a moral document."

One Democrat Wallis is willing to criticize is DNC chairman Howard Dean, whom he takes to task for the famous campaign howler of naming Job as his favorite book in the New Testament. "The worst thing," Wallis says, "is to be inauthentic." And on that score, Wallis throws a sop to the president: "From what I have seen and heard of George W. Bush (including in small meetings and personal conversation I've had with the president) I believe his faith to be both personal and real." The qualification that follows, however, is damning: The president "is often guilty of bad theology." As Wallis sees it, Bush and other Republicans want to make Americans believe that Jesus is—in a favorite refrain—"pro-war, pro-rich, and only pro-American."

That last theme, while a nasty misrepresentation of Bush's theology, makes perfect sense in the context of Wallis's 35-year history of effectively pacifist, anti-capitalist, pro-socialist positions. With the exception of abortion and family values, the political issues that animate him today are the direct descendants of those that launched him into a career of activism back in his student days, when he and his friends were being tear-gassed protesting U.S. involvement in Vietnam, in the heyday of the New Left.

Wallis is no stranger to fledgling movements. For starters, he was born into one. Wallis grew up in Detroit's Plymouth Brethren Church, an inde-

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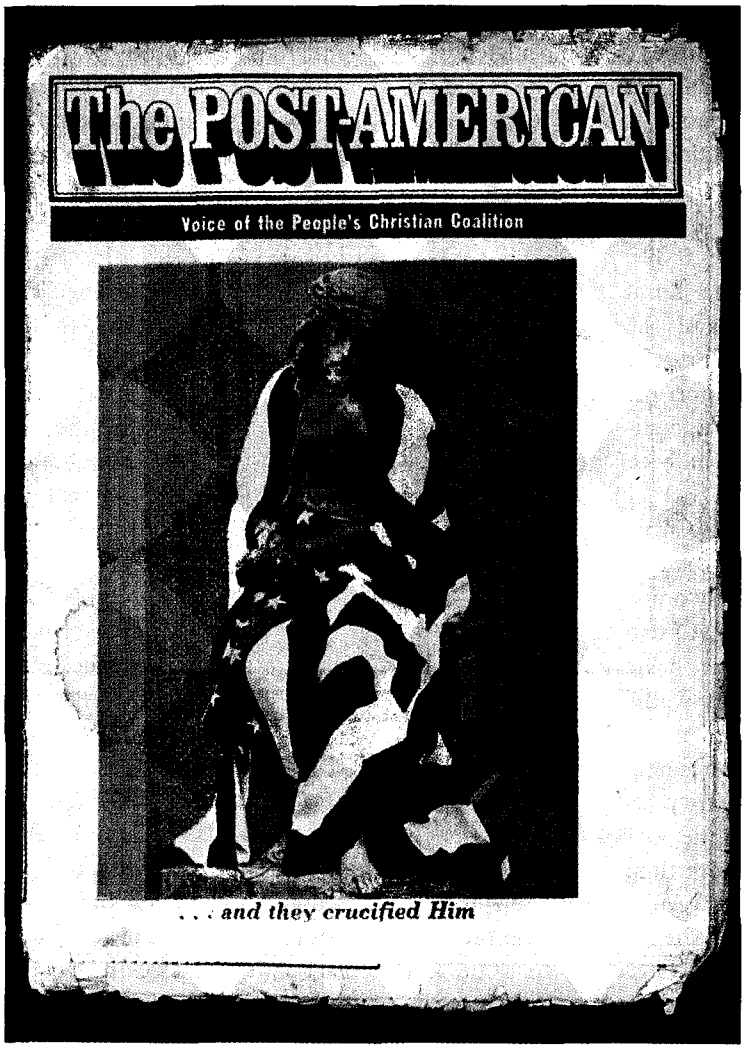
pendent neighborhood evangelical church of which his parents were founding members. Asked about his adolescent religious development, Wallis, 56, tells the same story, nearly word for word, in most venues. Talking to Terry Gross on NPR's *Fresh Air* at the beginning of his book publicity blitz, Wallis said:

"I was 14. . . . I had these questions about, you know, why we lived the way we did in white Detroit and why life seemed so different in black Detroit. . . . I went into the city and I found the other church, the other evangelical church. The black churches loved the same Jesus, read the same Bible, sang out of the same hymn book, but made it sound so much better than we did. . . . I got kicked out of [the Plymouth Brethren] church, found my home in the civil rights movements and the antiwar struggles of my generation and came back to faith later on."



In 1970, after graduating from Michigan State, Wallis enrolled in the theologically conservative Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago. He soon dropped out, and he and several other disaffected divinity school students founded a commune of sorts. Starting in 1971, the group chronicled its own tumultuous history in the pages of a semi-regular publication originally called the *Post-American*, and later renamed *Sojourners*.

The first issue of the *Post-American* had on its cover a picture of Jesus wrapped in an American flag, over the caption " . . . and they crucified Him." Inside, Jim Wallis authored the manifesto of his movement, announcing what would remain one of his central themes: "The American captivity of the church has resulted in the disastrous equation of the American way of life with the Christian way of life." Over the years, his magazine would devote reams of copy to refuting that equation and proving that "to be Christian in this time is to be post-American." The early volumes are filled with earnest discourses on Christian pacifism, civil rights, anti-Vietnam protest, anti-Israel polemics, and all-around anti-Americanism, complemented nicely by *Boogie Nights* typefaces and an angry hippie aesthetic.

It was around this time, with liberation theology hot in leftist Christian circles, that Wallis performed the exercise that would form the basis for his subsequent career: He went through the Bible with a pair of scissors and cut out all of the passages pertaining to the poor, to show how little was left when these were removed. When he was finished making this "holey" Bible, he had found his ministry: Jesus cared most for the "least of these," and "so should America."

Wallis was eager to get started disseminating his new message, but things weren't going well at home. His post-American commune had suffered its first crack-up in 1975, and Wallis and about 20 others had transplanted what was left of the enterprise from Chicago to Washington, D.C. But community living didn't flourish in Washington either.

The January 1977 issue of *Sojourners* ran the transcript of a discussion of the community's evolution. A youthful, bearded "Jim" recalls the moment of "a real shift" in his worldview when the first commune was falling apart. "It first came, I remember, while speaking at a conference on global justice and economics." He realized that while their goals were admirable, rule-based communal living was not working out. The group's "discussions turned into arguments and real disagreements over what model of commu-

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nity we would choose. . . . [We] literally began to lose faith and hope." At the moment of his deepest despair, Jim recalled: "I frankly admitted to the group of people I was speaking to that I wasn't really sure I had anything to say to them at all."

So Wallis decided to tune back in and see how things were going in the outside world. His conclusion: Things were not going well at all.

The evil effects of American actions were all around. In September 1979, Wallis wrote of the Vietnamese "boat people": "Many of today's refugees were inoculated with a taste for a Western lifestyle during the war years and are fleeing to support their consumer habit in other lands," somehow managing to credit their desperate flight in fear of totalitarian oppression to the corruption of capitalism.

In Ronald Reagan's 1980s, *Sojourners* expatiated on the moral equivalence of the USA and the USSR. "We must refuse to take sides," Wallis wrote, "in this horrible and deadly hypocrisy." For "a totalitarian spirit fuels the engines of both Wall Street and the Kremlin."

Citing the demands of his Christianity, Wallis consistently blamed his own country, while readily praising Marxist revolutionaries. Castro he saw as "serious about basic reform." Of the Sandinistas Wallis wrote, "they have brought a measure of justice to Nicaragua that has never been known before." Their policies "are designed to benefit the poor majority of the country more than the middle and upper classes." After the poor majority of Nicaraguan voters repudiated the Sandinistas in the election of 1990, Wallis asserted mysteriously that "the gift of democracy to the Nicaraguan people came from the Sandinistas."

Young Jim

Courtesy of Sojourners

Over the decades, *Sojourners* has adapted and evolved, until today it's essentially a website and an email newsletter. The remnants of the commune have morphed into the nondenominational Sojourners church, which meets in the offices of *Sojourners* magazine in a residential neighborhood in Washington. Wallis is its pastor, and he still participates in its monthly services, along with a congregation of "a few dozen." He also worships at an Episcopal church (his wife is an ordained minister in the Church of England) and the evangelical Cedar Ridge Community Church in Spencerville, Maryland.

Through the years, Wallis has become a minor fixture of Beltway culture, at the spot where piety and liberal politics meet. In his own way, he is a "cause celebrity," of the ilk of, say, Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund, or public television sage Bill Moyers. Another friend, U2's Bono, blurbed *God's Politics*, writing: "The Left mocks the Right. The Right knows it's right. Two ugly traits. How far should we go to try to understand each other's point of view? Maybe the distance grace covered on the cross is a clue."

Wallis's current project has a Clintonian ring: He's using his book tour—officially, the "*God's Politics* Movement Tour"—to foster a "national conversation." He sees himself as an itinerant preacher—"a 19th-century evangelical born in the wrong century"—and a "reformer" who thinks that, though "protest is good, alternatives are better." Now, says Wallis, is "the time for a new conversation about faith and politics in America," for real discussion of questions like whether God would want us to spend taxpayer dollars on missiles or medicine. Wallis's optimism about the power of "true, genuine, open dialogue" remains undimmed.

Besides, there's a special role for him. Up to this point, says Wallis, discussion of religion in politics has been unfairly dominated by the religious right. That needs to end before any progress can be made, and Wallis is doing his share to stop it. He's engaged in several dialogues with Jerry Falwell, for example, though the result isn't always constructive give and take. In their exchange on *Hannity & Colmes* on February 11, Wallis repeatedly informed Falwell that the "disrespectful monologue" he'd long enjoyed had come to an end:

> WALLIS: The good news is the monologue of the religious right is over, and a dialogue has finally begun.
> FALWELL: I think . . .
> WALLIS: Jerry—you know—Jerry—I didn't interrupt you, Jerry. Millions and millions of Christians, including evangelicals like me, want the nation to know that you don't speak for us. That your Jesus is pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-American, and your monologue is over.

For all Wallis's repeated denunciations of the monologue, an interviewer finds he has a certain penchant for

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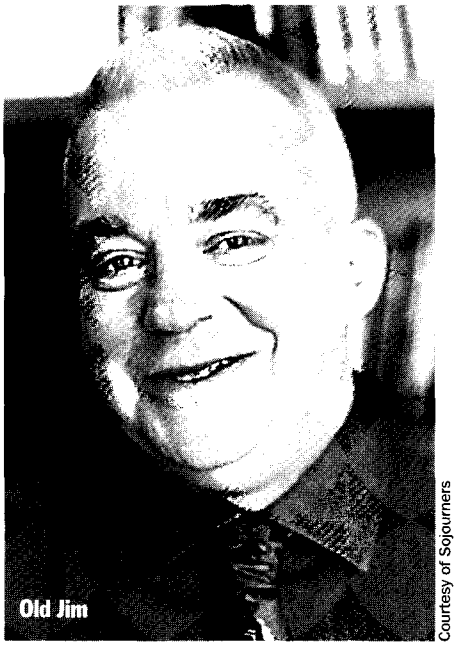
the form. This tendency makes one-on-one conversation tiresome, but allows Wallis to better control what gets said, and so prevent unflattering quotations from winding up in print.

Thus, Wallis prefers to answer all foreign policy questions with a condemnation of American policy in Iraq. One issue he seems particularly anxious to dodge is Afghanistan. Asked about the routing of the Taliban, he holds forth on the disasters of the "uninvited American occupation of Iraq." Pressed, he becomes distinctly uncomfortable, shifting in his seat and fiddling with his reading glasses.

This is because Wallis is functionally a pacifist, and he knows that advertising that fact, far from shoring up the liberal side in a national dialogue, will alienate Republicans and Democrats alike. After much questioning, Wallis admits that he thinks "we should have pursued more alternative solutions" with the Taliban before we went into Afghanistan.

Wallis devotes a significant portion of *God's Politics* to the question of what constitutes a "just war." In chapters like "Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Winning Without War," "Be Not Afraid: A Moral Response to Terrorism," and the more bluntly titled "Not a Just War: The Mistake of Iraq," he frets about Bush's repeated failure to meet the criteria for just warmaking, and his lack of interest in solving problems by addressing "root causes" like poverty. "There is a certain kind of just-war theory where the game is to create conditions for war that can almost never be satisfied," says Michael Cromartie of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. "Wallis plays that game."


Old Jim

Courtesy of Sojourners

Mainly, though, what Wallis is up to these days is building his "movement for spiritual and social change" and arguing for optimism over cynicism. Previous theological agonies dispelled, Wallis fills his book with chatty anecdotes from his speaking tours, his time teaching at Harvard, his appearances on TV and talk radio, his travels at home and abroad. He closes the book with the self-congratulatory (and possibility heretical) declaration: "we are the ones we have been waiting for."

Sojourners, once the home of firebrand rhetoric, also seems peculiarly tame. It cheerfully reports increasing membership and good book sales. There is still some red-meat anti-Americanism, but it is offered sparingly, between tales of blandly gratifying encounters with fans, like this one from a Valentine's Day trip to Memphis. Wallis gives it the title "Beyond the usual":

> I walked out of the Memphis Marriott to look for a cab that could take me to a local studio for an interview with Judy Woodruff for *Inside Politics* on CNN. The bellhop who rushed over to assist me was a young African-American woman who couldn't have been more than 23 or 24 years old. When she saw the copy of *God's Politics* I was carrying, she exclaimed, "Oh, that's the book all my friends are talking about! Is it good?" Two older bellhops I had met earlier were also standing there and poked the young woman playfully in the ribs. "He wrote the book!" they told her. The men were from local black churches and had cornered me earlier in the day to ask what text I was preaching on for the Lenten series at the downtown Calvary Episcopal Church, and we had a discussion about Ephesians, chapter 6. The younger bellhop got even more excited. "Could you sign my book if I bought one and brought it in tomorrow?" she asked eagerly. I had to leave before she got in the next day, but I left a signed copy for her at the front desk. Those are the kinds of experiences that have encouraged me the most on the book tour. When a young African-American woman from the Memphis Marriott and her friends are talking about faith and politics, we are reaching beyond the "usual" audience.

Wallis, who has always prided himself on his "special spiritual connection" with black churches, is clearly chuffed, though it's not obvious in what sense these bellhops are new recruits. Black Protestants—about half of whom identify themselves as evangelicals and 83 percent of whom voted for John Kerry—are hardly newcomers to the liberal cause. And the 22 percent of white evangelicals who voted for Kerry aren't much of a voting bloc.

Mind you, if the "progressive evangelical" movement doesn't pan out, there's plenty to keep Wallis busy. There are books to hawk, television appearances to make, politicians to condescend to, and celebrities to befriend.

But you've got to feel just a little sorry for the guy. Because Jim Wallis finds himself in a familiar situation. He has a message. He's prepared to lead. But despite his best efforts, he has once again come up rather short on the most important ingredient for a sucessful movement—followers. ♦

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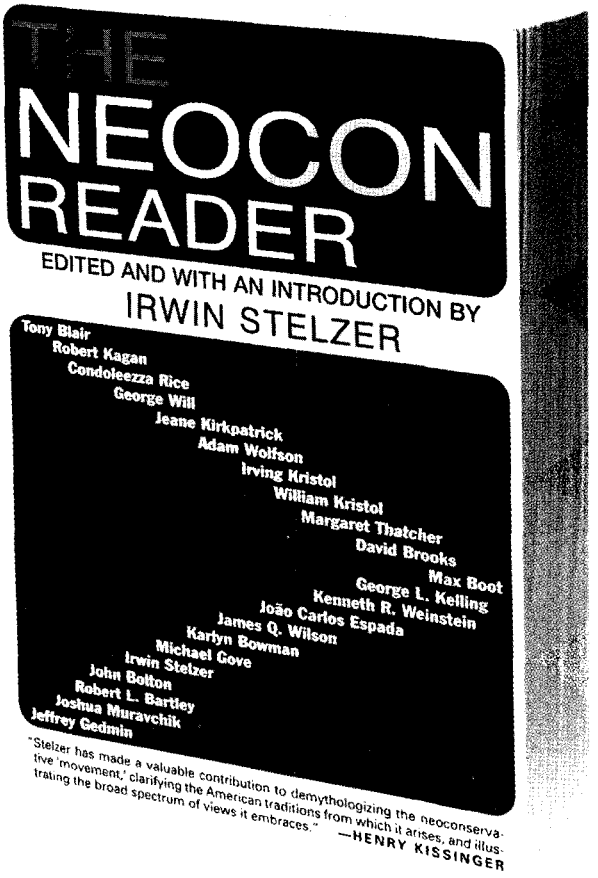
—MICHAEL BURLEIGH, *THE LITERARY REVIEW*



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Lane Kirkland

Lane's Labor's Lost

Lane Kirkland and the decline of the AFL-CIO By Arnold Beichman

This is an authorized biography, which, to cite the words of Samuel Johnson, means "in lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath." Arch Puddington has written a "lapidary" biography of a man who, in my opinion, was miscast as a labor leader when what he really wanted to be was a Democratic politician.

I would go even further: Had the personable, highly intelligent Kirkland entered the political arena, his career would have been far more impressive, and might even have propelled him to far greater heights than he ever achieved through the rough-and-tumble of labor politics. For when Kirkland took over the AFL-CIO presidency in 1979, as successor to the ailing George Meany, he was taking over an institution in a state of serious and irreversible decline in membership and influence. And the decline hasn't stopped.

Arnold Beichman is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

As Puddington writes about the present AFL-CIO: "The American labor movement today is smaller, less influential and more narrowly focused than it was under Kirkland. Labor today is more marginal and less respected than at any time since the 1920s."

Lane Kirkland
Champion of American Labor
by Arch Puddington
Wiley, 342 pp., $30

The average membership of unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO in 2004 totaled 12,951,461, a net decrease of 167,775 members since 2003. Union membership fell from 34 percent of the labor force in 1955 to 20 percent in 1979 to about 13 percent today. Most AFL-CIO members today are not industrial workers but federal, state, or local government employees. And the Reagan Democrat (aka the Tory worker) is no longer the spectacular phenomenon he once was. He is now a permanent fixture in American politics, as John Kerry discovered to his sorrow last November.

Whatever his failings to enhance labor's influence on the nation's domestic agenda, there is one area where the labor movement under Kirkland made an invaluable contribution: the battle against communism. Kirkland's contribution to the fight against communism and the Soviet Union cannot be overestimated. He was a leader in a long war that had begun in the earliest days of the Bolshevik revolution, when Communists in this country tried to fulfill Lenin's injunction: "It is necessary to . . . agree to any and every sacrifice, and even . . . if need be to resort to all sorts of stratagems, manoeuvres and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuges, in order to penetrate the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work in them at all costs."

Thanks to the arrogance of John L. Lewis, head of the CIO, the Communists in the 1940s were successful in

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their penetration strategy, so much so that they even wrote the resolutions of the annual CIO conventions. When fellow unionists questioned his pro-Communist direction, Lewis growled, "Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?" To his chagrin, when his Communist supporters in the fall of 1941 turned against the isolationist Lewis, he got his answer. He was forced to resign. At one point one-quarter of the CIO executive board were either Communist party members or under CP discipline. Nothing so scandalous ever occurred in the AFL.

When Kirkland took over as AFL-CIO president, the battle against domestic communism had long been won. But there was still a Soviet Union, the sworn enemy of free trade unionism. Kirkland's political war against international communism and an anti-anti-Communist Western Europe showed his talented leadership. It was Kirkland's finest hour. He made it his first order of business in the field of labor internationalism to lend unstinting support to the defiant Polish trade union organization, Solidarity, led by the redoubtable Lech Walesa.

Puddington's narrative of Kirkland's involvement with Solidarity is absolutely riveting. It is documented history, a transcendent and, until now, little-known achievement by American labor leadership in helping to win the Cold War. Would that Kirkland had shown similar talent on the domestic political scene. Would that he had followed the 1908 injunction of Samuel Gompers, the founder of the AFL, to "reward your friends and punish your enemies"—regardless of their party affiliation.

Kirkland's anti-communism had its limitations because he never knew a Democrat he didn't like, nor found a Republican he could support. In the 1980 election, Kirkland did not support Ronald Reagan, the onetime president of the AFL-CIO Screen Actors Guild, a man with unblemished anti-Communist and union credentials. Instead, he endorsed the bumbling, ineffectual Jimmy Carter, who would admonish the American people to free themselves from their "inordinate fear of communism." (Had Jimmy Carter been reelected in 1980, there would still, in my opinion, be a Soviet Union.)

Puddington's biography is woefully deficient in a realistic evaluation of Kirkland's labor history. Nor does he examine what I regard as Kirkland's colossal misjudgment in seeking to turn the AFL-CIO into a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Democratic party, a stratagem that the rank-and-file membership has repeatedly repudiated. Kirkland never gave an election endorsement to a Republican candidate for Congress, even those who supported AFL-CIO foreign policy positions. Kirkland's anti-communism began at the water's edge, and was second to his devotion to the Democratic party. At one time, he tried to get the AFL-CIO to enter candidates into Democratic primaries, but cooler heads prevailed.

One major misjudgment by Puddington needs correcting. In accepting Kirkland's criticism of Reagan's economic policies, Puddington ignores the Reagan economic recovery, which continued for 92 consecutive months from the trough of November 1982 until the peak of July 1990.

While there is much to criticize in Puddington's biography, it is, nevertheless, extremely readable, especially the chapters on Solidarity and on the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization illegal strike in August 1981. President Reagan ordered the 11,500 members back to work, and then fired those who didn't return. Ronald Reagan's daring action should have told Lane Kirkland that there was a new boy on the block who would not be bullied. ♦

The Gossip Gal

Liz Smith loves to eat, schmooze, and drop bold-face names. **BY JUDY BACHRACH**

"About all I do in my kitchen is use the saucepan for soup, hit the buttons on the microwave, and make coffee," Liz Smith, New York's premiere *gossipeuse*, informs us pretty much straightaway in her newest book, which contains, oddly enough, recipes. And not only recipes. Treatises on some very peculiar foods. Liz has eaten somewhere or other, almost inevitably in the company of someone famous or if not really famous then really self-aggrandizing, which is almost as useful. The kind of person, in other words, who inhabits Liz's column, invariably attached to kind and inapt adjectives.

Dishing
Great Dish—and Dishes—from America's Most Beloved Gossip Columnist
by Liz Smith
Simon & Schuster, 256 pp., $25

(Liz is often kind. This accounts for her professional longevity and a few of her gossipy coups. If your name is Ivana, say, or Nora, and you intend to divorce someone hopelessly unfaithful, famous, and loaded, it's best to call Liz right away—yes, even before your lawyer. That way you, and not your ex, will be the one to receive the kind and inapt adjectives.)

But back to food, about which I have a personal bias. (I like it a lot. And I love to cook.) Why a determined non-cook's thoughts on meal preparations were turned into a book is anybody's

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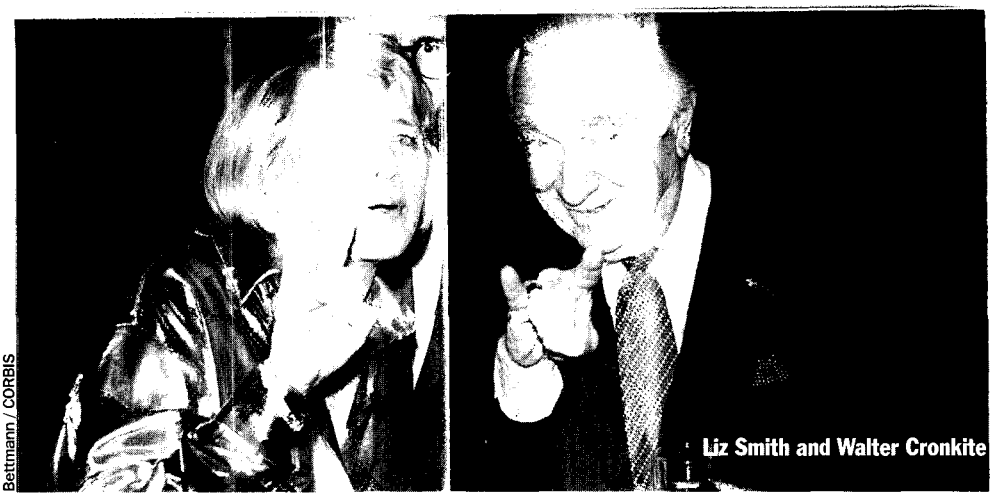
guess, but ultimately—sandwiched somewhere between Prairie Oysters and Rocky Mountain oysters, stuck between the Salmon Soup and Chicken Fried Steak—the popular columnist gives us a valuable hint: "Many writers now include descriptions of meals and feats of cookery as therapy."

Well, yes. Many writers now do. And a very bad, promiscuous habit it's becoming, too. Years ago, the writer/director Nora Ephron started the trend, dotting *Heartburn*, her roman-a-Carl (Bernstein), with a ditsy array of recipes; at least one of which—a baked mess of lima beans assaulted by cored pears and molasses—Liz herself reruns in her book because her late lover invented it. Then everyone got into the act, scattering odd and irrelevant recipes throughout their books with such profusion, it became the modern-day equivalent of the pathetic fallacy: a lazy writer's literary device.

(As Liz points out, fans of Patricia Cornwell's heroine, Dr. Kay Scarpetta, are offered—usually about the time Kay is threatened with instant massacre—the fictional pathologist's recipe for beef stew. As Liz does *not* point out, this is pretty weird, when you consider Scarpetta's creator has a history of battling eating disorders.)

Liz, of course, has no such problems. She inhales everything, bless her. Deep-fried Snickers bars, which are meant to be served with fudge or caramel sauce, watermelons from her native Texas, their skins green as lettuce, lobster rolls with plenty of mayonnaise, slatherings of beluga caviar even atop baked potatoes, and the Elvis Potato Sandwich (photo included), about which the less said the better.

But mainly Liz loves **Bold Face Names**, and although *Dishing* doesn't literally change its typeface for the likes of **Liz Taylor** and **Richard Burton**, **Frank Sinatra** and **Ava Gardner**, **Conrad Black**, **Lucullus**, **Brad Pitt**, **Tom Wolfe**, **Betsy Bloomingdale**, **Donald** and **Ivana Trump**, **Napoleon**, and "the grand actress **Christine Baranski**" (a dispatcher, we are informed, of "incredible tequilas with the worm in the bottle")—in fact it is they, and not the undercooked bacon peeking out from



Bettmann / CORBIS

Liz Smith and Walter Cronkite

underneath the melted cheese of the potato sandwich (I couldn't resist), who provide the drama for this book.

There's disenchantment: Some years before his death, Liz visits **Henry Grunwald**, whom she touchingly believes to be "the last of *Time*'s great editors" and her "idol," only to discover that he despises watermelon. There's tragedy on an epic scale: "What are you? Some kind of terrorist!" wonders **Julia Roberts** when Liz brings up the subject of biscuits and red-eyed gravy made from ham, while the actress is dieting. There's—oh hell, I don't know what to call this, but at some point Liz's dinner partner is **Evelyn de Rothschild** and the next thing you know, Liz turns 80 and he sends her a case of Chateau Lafite Rothschild. (All the reader derives from this encounter, however, is what Liz calls "a typical menu" from the Rothschild family, which includes something called green pea blinis and also "Roast Breast and Leg of Poussin.")

Celebrity is the food of Liz. Fame is her banquet. Big names—even medium names—are Liz's Frito Pies, which, the reader learns, the author discovered at the local Dairy Queen in Gonzales, Texas, and decided they were (quite like **Ivana,** when you think about it) "quick, cheap, crunchy, hot with fire and pepper, and totally satisfying."

Better than the simple listing of names, however, is what Liz does with these ingredients. Here she is a true chef. Widows are never mentioned in her citations without being rewed to the word "merry" (*cf.* **Casey Ribicoff**, the widow of the Connecticut senator, and **Tita Cahn**, "the merry widow of Oscar songwriter **Sammy Cahn**"). The least meritorious are paired with the happiest descriptions. Thus: "the TV genius **Chuck Barris**" or—my own personal favorite, a reference to a Sony executive—"the handsome CEO **Nobuyuki Idei** of Tokyo."

And that's not all. Liz is a master not only of guest lists, but also of what I like to think of as the conditional guest list: "I suppose if **Oscar** and **Annette de la Renta** and **Nancy** and **Henry Kissinger** hadn't been in the Dominican Republic, they'd have been there with us," she reports of some luncheon no-shows. That, I should add, is about the only tangy dish you're going to get on these or any other celebrities mentioned, because Liz doesn't like to waste her ammunition on a book.

Besides, she's a lady, our Liz. She's perfectly capable of turning words into bullets—"Discomfort Food" is how she refers to the fare of avant-garde restaurants—but usually prefers not to. This is why my own mother warned me against reviewing this book ("Judy, she's been nice to you . . . ").

And full disclosure—something I always prefer to stick at the end of a review—Liz has been nice to me. She once invited me to lunch in New York at Le Cirque, and then wrote "Seen lunching at Le Cirque: Judy Bachrach." She will call a spade a teaspoon. She is probably the only person in the world who uses the word "enlivened" as a synonym for "escorted"—as in "**Maurice Tempelsman,** the man who enlivened **Jacqueline Kennedy's** life after she divorced **Aristotle Onassis.**"

I don't really want to enliven Liz's book. But honestly. Anyone who can't stand the kitchen—and then writes about it, at considerable length—deserves a little heat. ♦

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Sins of Omission

How the New York Times *didn't report the Holocaust.* BY JACK FISCHEL

A great deal has been written about the failure of the Allies to forcibly respond to the Nazi destruction of European Jewry. But in recent years a number of historians have also noted the deficiencies of the American press in covering the evolving Holocaust. In particular, the *New York Times* has been accused of treating both the persecution and the subsequent annihilation of the Jews as a secondary story. As Laurel Leff notes in her compelling study of the *Times*'s coverage of the Nazi war against the Jews, "No American newspaper was better positioned to highlight the Holocaust than the *Times* and no American newspaper so influenced public discourse by its failure to do so."

Buried by the Times
The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper
by Laurel Leff
Cambridge University Press, 426 pp., $29

Leff chronicles how, from the start of the war in Europe in 1939 to its conclusion six years later, the *Times* published 1,186 stories about the Jews of Europe, but the unfolding genocide failed to "receive the continuous attention or prominent play that a story about the unprecedented attempt to wipe out an entire people deserved." She notes that the unfolding events that culminated in the Holocaust made the *Times* front page only 26 times, but in only six of those stories were Jews identified on the front page as the primary victims. Leff reports that on the rare occasions when the Holocaust made the front page, the *Times* obscured the fact that most of the victims were Jews, referring to them as refugees or persecuted minorities.

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This remained the case even after December 17, 1942, when the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union issued a public statement that "the German authorities . . . are now carrying out into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe"—thus eliminating the possibility for a skeptical press (including the *Times*) that atrocity reports reaching the West were either exaggerations or propaganda.

Many journalists were apprehensive about wartime atrocity reports emanating from Poland because of the memory of similar stories of German excesses in Belgium during World War I. Given their suspicions about the news they received, editors buried stories about Nazi outrages against Jews in the middle sections of their newspapers, and the *Times* was no exception. Even after the 1942 Allied statement, the *Times* continued to put stories about the Holocaust inside the paper, long after their authenticity had been confirmed.

Leff, a journalist who teaches at Northeastern University, attempts to explain why the *Times* failed, for the most part, to feature the unfolding genocide on the front page, or address it in editorials. She charges that the manner in which the *Times*—and the rest of the press, which often followed the lead of America's most important newspaper—underplayed the Nazi war against the Jews prevented any chance of arousing public opinion. And in documenting how the *Times* contributed to a political environment that led to inaction, Leff also reveals much about the insecurity of American Jews at that time, including such prominent and assimilated personalities as the *Times*'s publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger.

CORBIS
Arthur Hays Sulzberger

Sulzberger defined himself as a Jew by religion and an American by ethnicity, and strongly opposed all talk of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. At the height of reports that Jews were being murdered by the Nazis, Sulzberger became embroiled in a fight with the Zionist movement. In January 1942 a *Times* editorial opposed a British plan to create a Jewish military force to fight the Nazis, which the paper argued would lead to the formation of a "separate Zionist army" and make the establishment of a Zionist state one of the Allied "official war aims." The editorial further warned that the effort would raise the specter of American Jews having dual loyalties, and lead to "much misunderstanding among people who would believe that Jews wanted something different from what other Americans wanted."

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The *Times*'s reporting on the Holocaust can best be understood from the perspective of Sulzberger's view that singling out the Jews as special victims of the Nazis would be a concession to Hitler's racial views, and a contravention of his convictions that Jews were not a race or a people. Leff maintains that for "Sulzberger to retreat from this belief would mean to acknowledge that his place in America and his identity as an American were not as secure as he resolutely asserted." Throughout the war Sulzberger repeatedly stated that America came first, and that the only hope for European Jews was linked to that of other groups. As Leff notes, "His newspaper . . . ran front-page stories describing refugees seeking shelter, Frenchmen facing confiscation, or civilians dying in German camps, without making clear the refugees, Frenchmen, and civilians were mostly Jews." Sulzberger may also have hesitated to lead his fellow Americans to recognize the suffering of European Jewry lest the *Times* be accused of special pleading. Sulzberger was aware that, as the Jewish owner of the country's most important newspaper, he was vulnerable to the canard that the Jews had dragged America into a European war.

Would the manner in which the press in general, and the *Times* in particular, reported on the Holocaust have made a difference? Given the prevalence of anti-Semitism in America at the time, it is hard to imagine that full disclosure of the Nazi genocide would have altered public opinion to the extent that it would have forced more decisive action from the Roosevelt administration on behalf of the Jews. But this obscures the point that the press in general, and the *Times* in particular, shirked their responsibility; and, as historian Deborah Lipstadt has written, the "press bears a great measure of responsibility for the public's skepticism and ignorance of the scope of the wartime tragedy."

Leff concludes that the *New York Times* contributed to the public's ignorance "because the *Times* and other publications did not feature what was happening to Jews as Jews on its front page, or write about their fate repeatedly in hard-hitting editorials, or highlight their plight in magazines or in retrospectives. The *Times*'s tendency to not identify the victims as Jews and to link their fate with that of other suffering peoples made it even harder to recognize the extent to which the Jews were special targets of Hitler's wrath. . . . Thus the full story of European Jewry's destruction remained below the surface, only now and then in a diluted and fractured form. . . . In the process, the *Times* helped to drown out the last cry from the abyss." ♦

The Taxman Cometh

And changeth the culture of the IRS.

BY STEPHEN BARBARA

President Lincoln created the Internal Revenue Service to collect badly needed taxes during the Civil War. Since then, Americans have resented it, as they resent death and foreign films. It has often seemed an arbitrary institution: "judge, jury, and executioner," in the memorable words of one taxpayer. Businessman Charles O. Rossotti acted as IRS commissioner for five years (1997-2002), and that is a long time by IRS standards. One former commissioner lasted only three months in office; two others endured no more than seven. The butt of endless jokes and the recipient of much hate mail, the IRS commissioner is, by definition, an unhappy man. But Rossotti, a calm and detached character, succeeded where others failed. This is the memoir of a sensible man effecting positive change despite the hysterical and unreasonable demands of politicians, journalists, and whistleblowers of every stripe.

Many Unhappy Returns
One Man's Quest to Turn Around the Most Unpopular Organization in America
by Charles O. Rossotti
Harvard Business School Press, 340 pp., $26.95

It is important to stress that this is the book of a businessman, for the IRS commissioners before Rossotti had all been tax lawyers, and no one would want to read the memoir of a tax lawyer. Formerly CEO and chairman of the consulting firm American Management Systems, Inc., Rossotti was appointed to run the IRS on the model of a successful 21st-century business. This gives him the mystique of an outsider in these pages, a man on a mission that happens to take place in Washington rather than a careerist eager for headlines. It also gives the book its proper place in the business section of bookstores. Rossotti is here to impart lessons and principles culled from his experience as a successful leader.

What did he accomplish? By most accounts, the IRS before Rossotti's tenure was in a state of crisis. A *Newsweek* headline of 1997 powerfully summed up the feelings of many taxpayers: "The IRS has become a rogue organization wielding its awesome power under a cloak of secrecy." Congressional hearings that same year painted a similarly grim picture, with agency employees and angry taxpayers testifying to poor service, billions wasted on failed computer projects, bad management, unusually cruel treatment of customers, and other problems.

By 2002, the year that Rossotti ended his term, he could look back confi-

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dently on five years of work: "The IRS made fundamental changes in the way it did business while continuing to collect $2 trillion per year—all in the glare of extraordinary public scrutiny." By changes he means improvements. There were many.

Perhaps Rossotti's main achievement was to transform the culture of the IRS, which previously had been not only adversarial toward taxpayers, but positively Kafkaesque in its manner of visiting nightmares on the wayward and completely innocent alike. Rossotti noted the psychology at work. Since hatred of tax collectors was a common sentiment through the ages (it starts with the Bible), tax experts had developed a hardened sense of their own image: "The agency is not doing its job if it's not making people unhappy," one employee stated bluntly.

As the CEO of a highly profitable consulting firm, Rossotti had learned to treat his customers well. He brought this ethic to the IRS, calling taxpayers "customers" and coining a new mission statement for the agency: "Provide America's taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities and by applying the law with integrity and fairness for all."

The idea of *serving* taxpayers would never have occurred to a tax lawyer, and in hindsight, Congress took a wise gamble in appointing Rossotti as commissioner, for later statistics proved his businesslike method correct. The IRS could collect 95 percent of the government's revenue without any need for bullying or harassment. It turned out that most people were willing to pay their taxes and were even more compliant when given clear, simple instructions. By 2002, consumer ratings of the IRS had dramatically improved, as taxpayers found their calls answered and their problems given careful attention.

Rossotti's other main achievement as commissioner was to modernize the structure and technology of the IRS. This was no easy feat, considering that when he first came to the agency he found computer systems dating from the 1960s and '70s. Worse, he was daily faced with the Washington temptation to "win the headlines"—that is, make bold predictions of progress in order to improve his media image. Never slavish, Rossotti made few promises, but delivered on those he did make, preferring to focus on the agency's priorities despite the heat of political pressure. In the end, he brought the IRS into the 21st century, helping to ensure modern technology systems and easy Internet tax filing. He also greatly simplified the hieratic and elaborate structure of the IRS, cutting unnecessary management layers and jobs.

If Malcolm Gladwell is your idea of a business guru, and the tipping point your idea of business wisdom, this is not your book. Rossotti is more cautionary than visionary, the George H. Ross to Donald Trump. As he explains early in this memoir, he learned most of his business lessons by watching his parents, Italian immigrants, run a successful imported goods store. The adult Rossotti is likewise a simple man resolutely applying intelligent principles to complex problems. It is a strategy and mindset that brought great change to the IRS and a little bit of relief to America's taxpayers, even as it continued to bring tax revenue to the government.

Anyone who has gone too far afield in his search for business advice will do well to read this book. And anyone curious for an insider's view of the IRS might start here. ♦

The B-List Museum

Not every Old Master painted masterpieces.

BY THOMAS M. DISCH

It's a tenet of the received wisdom that museums are the cathedrals of our new era, however it is to be called. Who else, after all, can afford the prices? The Metropolitan Museum has just acquired its costliest work ever, at a price of between $45 and $50 million. And the awe-inspiring thing about the Met's "Stroganoff Madonna and Child" is its price tag.

Not that the picture is without aesthetic merit or art-historical value. It is a Duccio, after all, and there are only a dozen or so others known to exist, and none likely to come on the market again. Painted *circa* 1300 in tempera and gold on a wood panel, the Stroganoff Madonna certainly looks venerable, as though in the home stretch of art's long journey to dust. Its frame is crumbling, its gilt mottled, the Virgin's visage faded to reveal the ground of cadaverous *vedacchio*. One expects all Siennese saints of a certain age to have green faces, but it's hard to get over a modern bias for flesh tones.

None of these things detracts from the work's value but, rather, underline its authenticity as an Italian Primitive of the best pedigree, as do the lady's limp and noodlelike fingers and the entirely hypothetical anatomy of the infant Christ. One looks at it and thinks, "How very old." But only a curator, like the Met's Keith Christiansen, is likely to find it "incredibly beautiful" and "unbelievably moving." So Christiansen is quoted in the *New York Times*'s puff piece instructing us in how to regard this recent acquisition. The Met's director, Philippe de Montebello, declares that it is "transfixing" and "a work of sublime beauty."

The Stroganoff Madonna is a vivid lesson in how paintings can be like

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postage stamps and baseball trading cards: precious for their rarity more than for innate merit. And it is the fate of supremely rare paintings nowadays that they are destined for the best-funded museums, whose public mission it is to keep them safe and offer them to the public gaze, as tangible evidence of the community of Western Civilization. De Montebello would have been remiss in his duty as director if he had not snapped up the only Duccio the Met might ever have a chance to acquire. But sublimely beautiful? In the eyes of their beholder, "promising" would come closer to the mark. But then, I've never been one to linger in the Met's room of Italian Primitives, where the Stroganoff Madonna now commands the respectful gaze of guards, visitors, and a gallery full of green-faced saints.

Without the occasion for skeptical appraisal presented by the Stroganoff Madonna, I am sure I would have been cowed into a dutiful, conventional reverence by the current miscellany of Renaissance masters at the Met, the banner of which reads in its entirety: "From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master." It is the last name on the list, alas, that points to the star of the show, which, like the man's career, never manages to reach lift-off. If the name doesn't register, don't feel under-educated. For centuries Fra Carnevale seemed to have been valued more as a maker of enigmas than a fully certified Old Master.

The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute

Madonna and Child Attended by Angels *by Piero della Francesca*

The Barberini Panels are his defining work. Before two classical architectural *caprichios* are congregated groups of heavily robed women, shaking hands or looking about to no evident purpose. Scholars suppose that one panel represents the birth of the Virgin and speculate that the other shows her presentation at the Temple. Evidently neither was a joyful occasion, and feminists looking for ammunition for their downtrodden position in patriarchal culture need look no further.

However, the interest of the panels is not in its inscrutable little drama but in the two-stage sets where it takes place, with the architecture's fussy anachronistic details (a mix of all known past cultures) and its precise, but unpersuasive, scheme of perspec-

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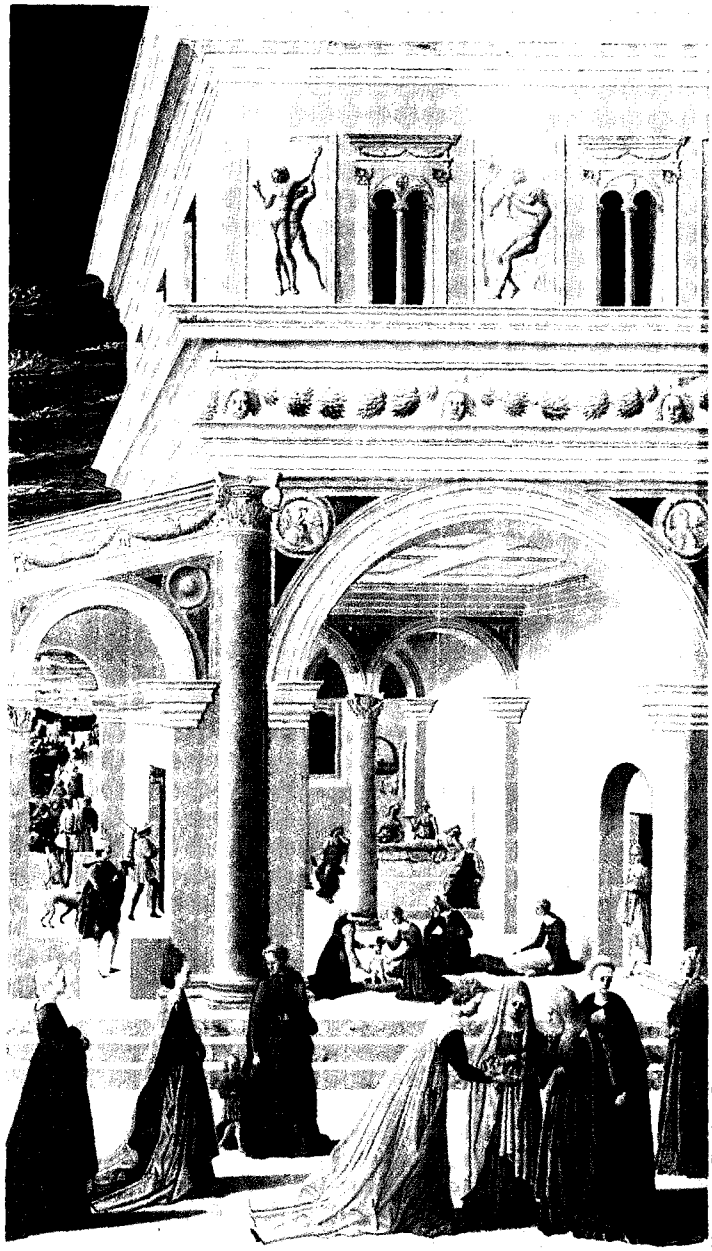

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Birth of the Virgin *by Fra Carnevale*

tive. The literature that tries to account for the Barberini Panels is immense, and Keith Christiansen's catalogue offers such a bounty of it, such a wealth of information as to provenances and attributions of all the works on view, that it can only be read when it is laid flat on a table. Even with sturdy support and great patience, I doubt that anyone is likely to try to *read* the catalog, anymore than anyone would try to read the federal budget. The catalogue is simply a required decorum at such an event. The sense one gains is that one has attended a convocation of some Old Masters of less than first rank—and not much in common except their conjoint ill luck in having worked in the 1440s just before the Renaissance kicked into high gear.

The two real stars of the show, Lippi, in whose studio Fra Carnevale worked in the late 1440s, and Piero della Francesca, who might have shaken hands with the younger painter, pretty much cast the others in the shade. Within a quarter-century the stars of Italian art would be of another magnitude altogether: Mantegna, Botticelli, Verrocchio, Pollaiuolo, Ghirlandaio . . . The spelling bee goes on, and the stars get even brighter. But what they all have in common is that their paintings can command one's attention on their own. You don't need an audio guide to tell you why you're in the museum.

This is true of only a few B-list paintings in the Carnevale show, usually because of some anecdotal element in the painting. There are a pair of small panels by Domenico Veneziano that provoke such extracurricular curiosity. A buff Saint John is seen in the desert, stripping, and Saint Zenobius prepares to resurrect a bleeding child in front of his hysterical mother in a drolly ideal public square. The Barberini Panels' gaucheness is nothing as compared with Fra Carnevale's ambitious botch of a Crucifixion, with Christ's Halloween mask of a head slumped on a torso of ideal anatomical regularity. Behind Christ is a sky and rocky landscape as purely notional as the Ptolemaic universe. Some of the anatomy, especially Christ's lower legs, is excellent, but the whole thing simply doesn't gel.

Another B-list painter, Giovanni da Camerino, is represented by another Crucifixion, this one a portable standard, or a double-sided painting designed to be carried on a pole in public processions. Out of its original, festal context it fares badly, with a host of painterly solecisms that rising craft standards would eliminate from the better workshops in the coming decades.

The problem that such also-ran Old Masters pose is what to do with all their productions. Their antiquity has made them precious, like the Stroganoff Madonna, but their sheer number relegates them to basements, annexes, and storerooms of the museums where they tend to wind up when their original owners, the decayed aristocracies and bankrupt mountain chapels, no longer have the cash to pay for their insurance. If one of them had its own nice apse in a hometown chapel, as is the case all about Europe, that would be nice. But *en masse*, and demanding some hours of one's attention? You would do better studying Greek.

The de-accessioning of the snows of yesteryear has been going on since at least the 18th century, and reached its zenith in the Gilded Age when Bernard Berenson trawled Italy on behalf of American millionaires. The Met's Duccio acquisition, and a show like the Carnevale exhibition, represent a kind of mopping-up operation—as if to say, "Berenson, look what you missed!" A saturation point has probably been reached for the amount of public attention that lesser masters of any era can be expected to generate.

In an odd way, the future of such art may lie in returning it to its origins as objects of veneration. The basements of the great museums can be hallowed ground, all the more to be revered for their air of quiet abandonment. London's National Gallery has a marvelous dimly lighted crypt filled with a jumble sale of all art history's John Does. That, and retired missile silos in Kansas, seem the best depository for the ever mounting surplusage of art that doesn't quite make it. ♦

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"I pick a winner and something like this happens."

Books in Brief

Winning the Future: A 21st Century Contract with America **by Newt Gingrich (Regnery, 244 pp., $27.95).** Like cockroaches and the poor, Newt Gingrich, it seems, will always be with us. Actually, that's an unfair comparison; Gingrich, after all, is rich. Besides, he prefers being likened to a different insect: "We planned in cicadas," he has cryptically told reporters, referring to the noisy, red-eyed pests that emerge from the earth every 17 years to mate and die. It's an apt metaphor. Gingrich first sprung out from the Georgia red clay in 1978, when, after years of effort, he won a seat in the House of Representatives. In Washington he burrowed below again, where he quietly fashioned the institutions of Republican revival. Holding the Contract With America in his right hand he reappeared in 1994, when Americans elected the first Republican Congress in over 40 years. Gingrich became speaker of the House. He was the Robespierre of the Republican Revolution: intellectual, visionary, ambitious, and audacious. His reign was brief. In 1998 he resigned and moved back to Georgia.

Or so it seemed. It's now clear that Gingrich instead went underground, as he had done before, and in his subterranean state he began several new careers, simultaneously, as a political strategist, a talking head, a health care consultant, and an author. His latest book is both polemical and programmatic. In it he attacks the "liberal elite minority," judges who disagree with him, and terrorists. He unveils a new Contract With America, which includes Social Security reform, "Entrepreneurial Public Management," and "congressional reform."

"Congressional reform" is an echo of the original Contract With America, which promised to force "Congress to live under the same laws as every other American," cut congressional staffs, slash budgets, and enact term limits. Another item in Gingrich's new contract—"balance the federal budget"—was also in the last one. As was a third item: "Defend America." Indeed, this new contract provokes profound nostalgia; it is the same feeling, I'm told, as recalling a lost love, or dipping a *madeleine* in tea. As the book progresses the pangs of nostalgia grow. In the end, you realize that *Winning the Future* is really about the past; about what Gingrich and his band of revolutionaries couldn't accomplish ten years ago; about what they still have left on their plates.

What *did* the revolutionaries accomplish? That's the question

answered by ***The Enduring Revolution: How the Contract with America Continues to Shape the Nation*** **by Major Garrett (Crown Forum, 325 pp., $25.95).** Before he was on Fox News Channel, Garrett was a print journalist, and he's still a fantastic reporter. For his book he spoke to Gingrich, Tom DeLay, Bruce Reed, Grover Norquist, and many others. He anchors his narrative 20 years ago, then quickly retraces the Republican party's ascendance. This is a well-researched and lucidly written book, but sometimes it devolves into the Whig interpretation of history—telling us a story of inevitable progress.

The Enduring Revolution ends in November 2003, when Congress passed President Bush's prescription drug entitlement. Garrett provides a blow-by-blow account of the bill's passage, and his story is detailed and grim. The House leadership strong-armed reluctant conservatives into voting for the drug bill, the largest expansion of government in almost half a century. Garrett concedes that "to many conservatives" the Medicare reform was "the triumph of politics for the sake of power." Reading this chapter I was struck most by former Speaker Gingrich's presence on the House floor that November night, hanging around that body like a phantom limb. He sweet-talked conservatives into voting Yes, and promised a coming age of reform. It was just like old times.

—Matthew Continetti

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Parody

CNN's Larry King typically makes lavish mention of anchor Aaron Brown . . . all in service of one goal: To ensure that the more than one million viewers Mr. King draws in an average hour, the most successful on CNN, might be persuaded to watch Mr. Brown's news program. In recent years . . . nearly half of them have spurned Mr. King's advice and departed in the first few minutes.

—News Item

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM—CONFIDENTIAL

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and certainly wouldn't want to interfere with Aaron's aristocratic bearing or the innate dignity of his broadcast style. But ratings are important in our business (as I need hardly tell you!) and I've been brainstorming with some of Larry's people about the problem. They have a few suggestions for Aaron's openings after Larry throws him the toss, and I think they work.

1) You can take it from me, Aaron Brown, that if King Fahd isn't getting that extra jolt of pep that people our age need every morning, it's probably because he isn't adding Garlique™ to his daily regimen.

2) I don't care what anybody says, Norway's former prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland is still one very special lady.

3) Okay, on the Supreme Court you've got two ladies and seven guys on the bench, and you're telling me there isn't any chemistry going on? Here to talk about it is the lady who wrote the book on office romance, Helen Gurley Brown.

4) Looking for a good beach read this summer? Believe me, for action, adventure, romance, and good old-fashioned page-turning suspense, you can't do better than Jared Diamond's *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*.

5) Folks, if you think Michael Jackson is Wacko Jacko, wait'll you get a load of North Korea's numero uno, Kim Jong Il.

6) And we're back taking your calls with Germany's chancellor, Gerhard Schröder. Mr. Chancellor, a quick question: You're married to wife number four now, and I'm told that the German people are all right with that. So if you had married, say, seven or eight different ladies, am I right to think that wouldn't have any effect on your polls?

7) Call me old-fashioned, but for my money, the number-one date flick is still *The Blackboard Jungle*.

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Judging Charter Schools

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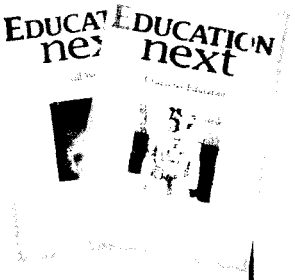

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Are charter schools succeeding or failing? The answer depends on which study—and which newspaper—you read. If you rely on the *New York Times*—almost never a good thing to do on this topic—you might conclude that U.S. charter schools are a disaster area. If you read the *Denver Post*, you'll see that Colorado charter schools are outperforming that state's district-operated public schools. *USA Today* reports "mixed results," and the *Washington Post* focuses on the difficulty of making reliable comparisons.

What to believe? I have been watching, studying, and reading about charter schools since the birth of this idea fourteen years ago. Here are my five (current) conclusions:

1. **There is no dispute about the charter school movement's growth to 3,300 schools enrolling close to a million children.**

2. There is little disagreement about charters' popularity with parents anxious to get their kids out of failing, heedless, and frequently dangerous district schools but too poor to afford private schools. Many charters have waiting lists; but for arbitrary caps and fiscal constraints imposed by their political foes, there'd be many more of them attended by many more youngsters.

3. The old allegation that charters would "cream" the ablest kids from the most fortunate homes turns out to be dead wrong. They enroll, on average, more poor and minority youngsters than nearby district schools, and many of their pupils arrive with dreadful academic records or having already dropped out. It turns out that's *why* they enroll: their parents are desperate.

4. Putting the word "charter" over a schoolhouse door assures neither success nor failure. These schools are astoundingly diverse. Some are the highest-performing schools in town. Others are total messes. At the end of the day, what makes the good ones succeed is akin to what makes good public (and private) schools succeed: effective leadership, a clear and focused mission, a dedicated team of competent adults, high expectations for all students combined with plenty of individual attention, and so on. What the charter designation does is create the opportunity to build such schools with less bureaucratic (and teacher union) hassle.

5. **What we most want to know about charter schools isn't how they are currently performing against fixed standards but how much their students learn while enrolled in them.** Some people call this the "academic value added" by the school itself. Yet despite the myriad of dueling studies, there's virtually no data yet that speak to the value-added question, nor can it be answered by the comparisons that newspaper articles focus on.

It is not just that better research is needed. The reason not to be swayed by the current crop of studies is that, while some are done by honest scholars, many are the work of interest groups with political agendas—and all of their results are being used for political ends. It is way too early to pronounce the charter movement a success or failure. But surely it's an experiment worth continuing—and studying.

—Chester E. Finn Jr.

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution; chairman of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education; and president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

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